Action Stories of Every Variety

ARGOSY

ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

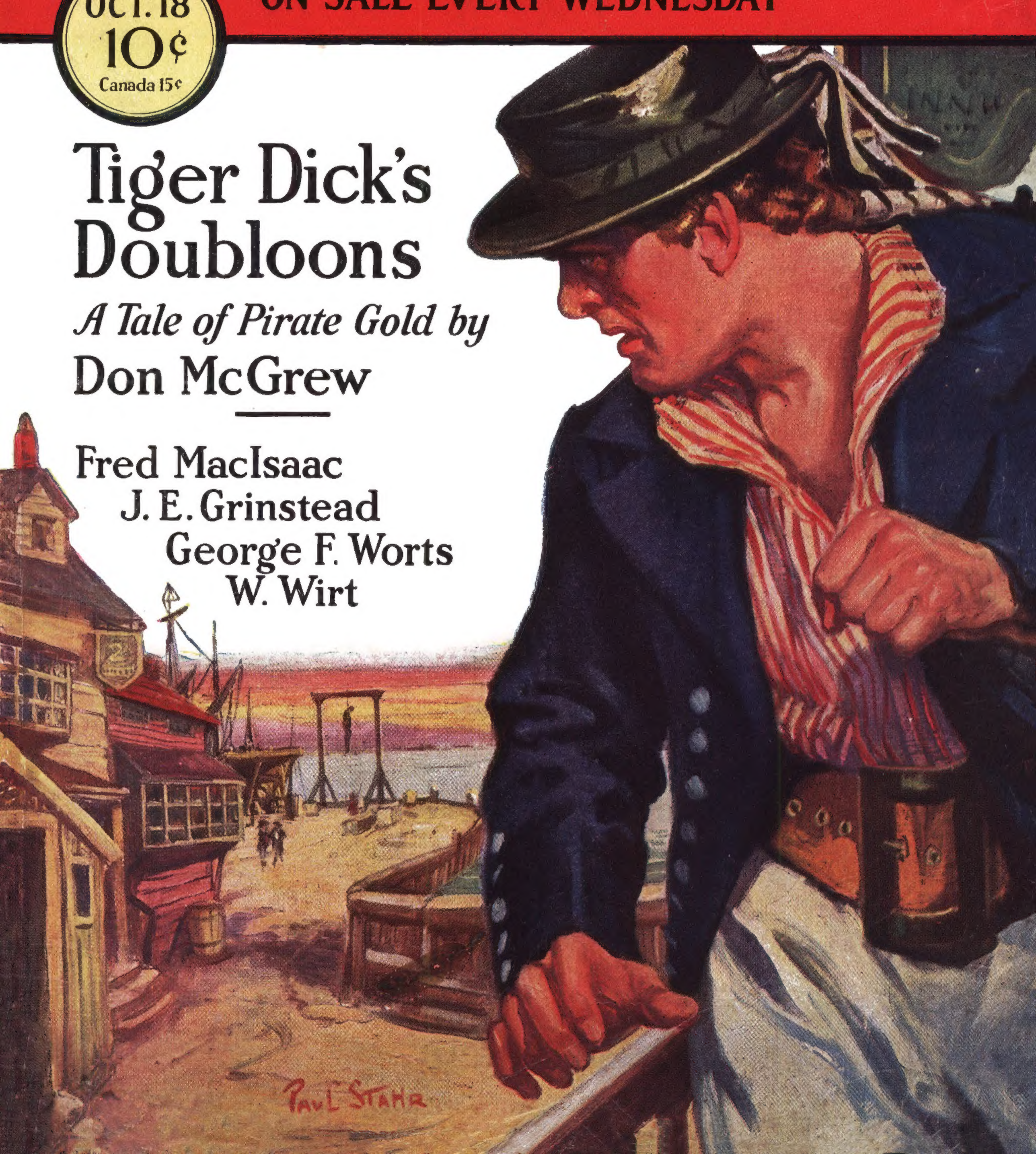
OCT. 18
10¢
Canada 15¢

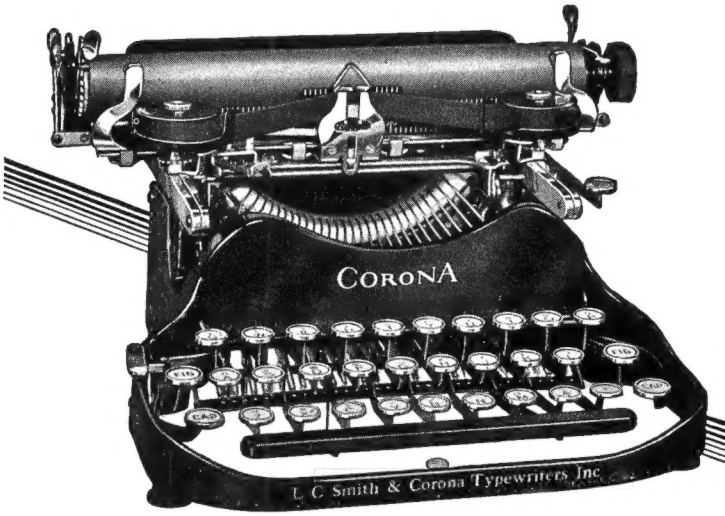
Tiger Dick's Doubloons

A Tale of Pirate Gold by

Don McGrew

Fred MacIsaac
J. E. Grinstead
George F. Worts
W. Wirt





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Ship me the Corona, F. O. B. Chicago. On arrival I'll deposit $2 with express agent. If I keep the machine, I'll send you $3 a month until the $37.90 balance of $39.90 price is paid; the title to remain with you until then. I am to have 10 days to try the typewriter. If I decide not to keep it, I will repack and return to express agent and get my money back. You are to give your standard guarantee.

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Employed by _____

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Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, **"Who Wins and Why,"** and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X:

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City ..... State .....

Occupation .....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

ARGOSY

ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

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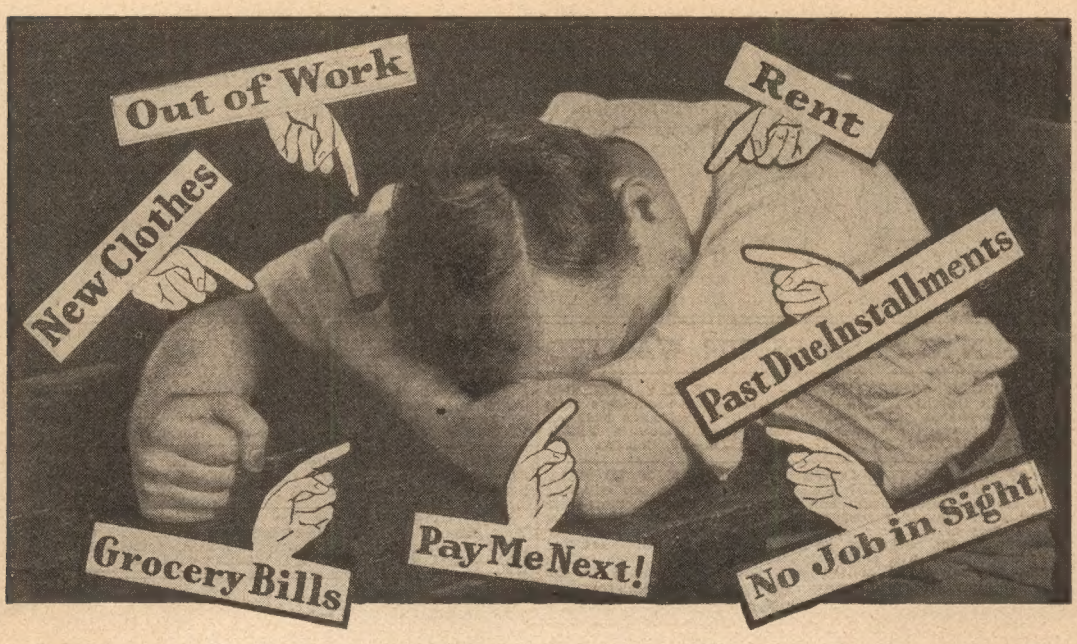

Are You Out of a Job?

THEN SEND ME YOUR NAME AND I'LL GIVE YOU AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY TO

Make $15 a Day!

Are you out of work or afraid of losing your job? Are you wondering where the money is coming from to pay your bills? Are you dissatisfied with being hard pressed for money every time there's a slack season?

Then you're the man or woman I'm looking for. I've got a good opening for you *right now*—a wonderful proposition that offers a chance to start right in making up to $15 a day—full time or spare time—in pleasant, dignified work. There will be no slack seasons. *With my proposition I'll guarantee you steady work as long as you want it!*

$110 a Week

Just send me your name. That's all I ask. I'll show you how Sol. Korenblit, of N. Y., took hold of my proposition and made $110 a week. H. L. Lennon writes, "After leaving my old job last Thursday I went out Friday morning and made $39.63 in 7½ hours." Mrs. Jewel Hackett, of Ohio, cleared $33 in 7 hours—more than she formerly made in two whole weeks in a factory. Of course some make more than others. But these big earnings of a few of my Representatives show the wonderful possibilities. And right now, I am in a position to offer you a proposition *even better* than the one I gave these people!

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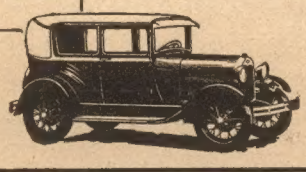

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I don't want your money. You positively don't need any capital. All I want is a chance to lay the facts before you. If you want this amazing chance to make $15 a day—with an old, reliable, million-dollar manufacturing company—then mail the coupon and see how easy it is to get started. Don't miss this chance. It doesn't cost a penny to investigate. Mail the coupon. Do it today—RIGHT NOW!

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I'm tired of short pay and long layoffs. Tell me about your plan that offers a sure, *steady* chance to make $15 a day—*starting at once.* Also explain your FREE Ford Offer.

Name.....

Address.....

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ALL-STORY

COMBINED WITH MUNSEY

Love Stories of the American Girl

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20c 20c

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In about ten years Radio has grown from a $2,000,000 to a $1,000,000,000 industry. Over 300,000 jobs have been created. Hundreds more are being opened every year by its continued growth. Men and young men with the right training—the kind of training I give you—are needed continually.

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Broadcasting stations use engineers, operators, station managers and pay $1,800 to $5,000 a year. Manufacturers continually need testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, service men, buyers, for jobs paying up to $15,000 a year. Shipping companies use hundreds of Radio operators, give them world wide travel at practically no expense and a salary of $85 to $200 a month. Dealers and jobbers employ service men, salesmen, buyers, managers, and pay $30 to $100 a week. There are many other opportunities too.

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National Radio Institute, Dept. OLK
Washington, D. C.

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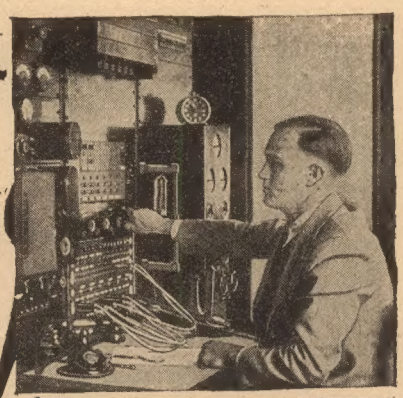

I will give You my new 8 OUTFITS of RADIO PARTS for a home Experimental Laboratory

You can build over 100 circuits with these outfits. You build and experiment with the circuits used in Crosley, Atwater-Kent, Eveready, Majestic, Zenith, and other popular sets. You learn how these sets work, why they work, how to make them work. This makes learning at home easy, fascinating, practical.

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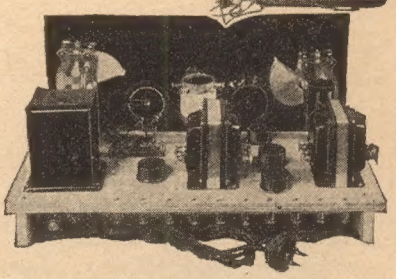

I am doubling and tripling the salaries of many in one year and less Find out about this quick way to BIGGER PAY

Radio Needs Trained Men

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Big Money! Give Away

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H. W. Eakins, President,
1011 High Street, Springfield, Ohio.

Consider me an applicant for opening as owner of one of your businesses on your new plan that starts me in big business without doing any high pressure selling or house to house canvassing.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

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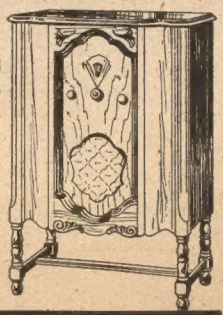

The latest in Radio at lowest wholesale prices—New 1931 Screen Grid Humless All-Electric Sets, remote control, public address, phono-combinations—all dynamic speaker equipped. Also battery operated sets. Beautiful consoles. Values you never saw before in accessories, parts, kits, electric appliances, etc. Get this FREE book today. Most complete catalog in radio. 168 pages of big money-saving values... highly illustrated.

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Artificial Ear Drum

George P. Way, Inc., 460 Hofmann Building, Detroit, Michigan

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$1900 to $2700 A YEAR

Many Government Jobs Open to Women. Mail Coupon Today Sure

COUPON

Franklin Institute, Dept. P-277, Rochester, N.Y.

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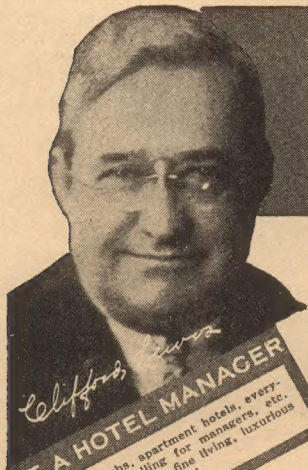
Name.....

Address.....

1000 HOTEL POSITIONS OPEN! Proof!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BE A HOTEL MANAGER
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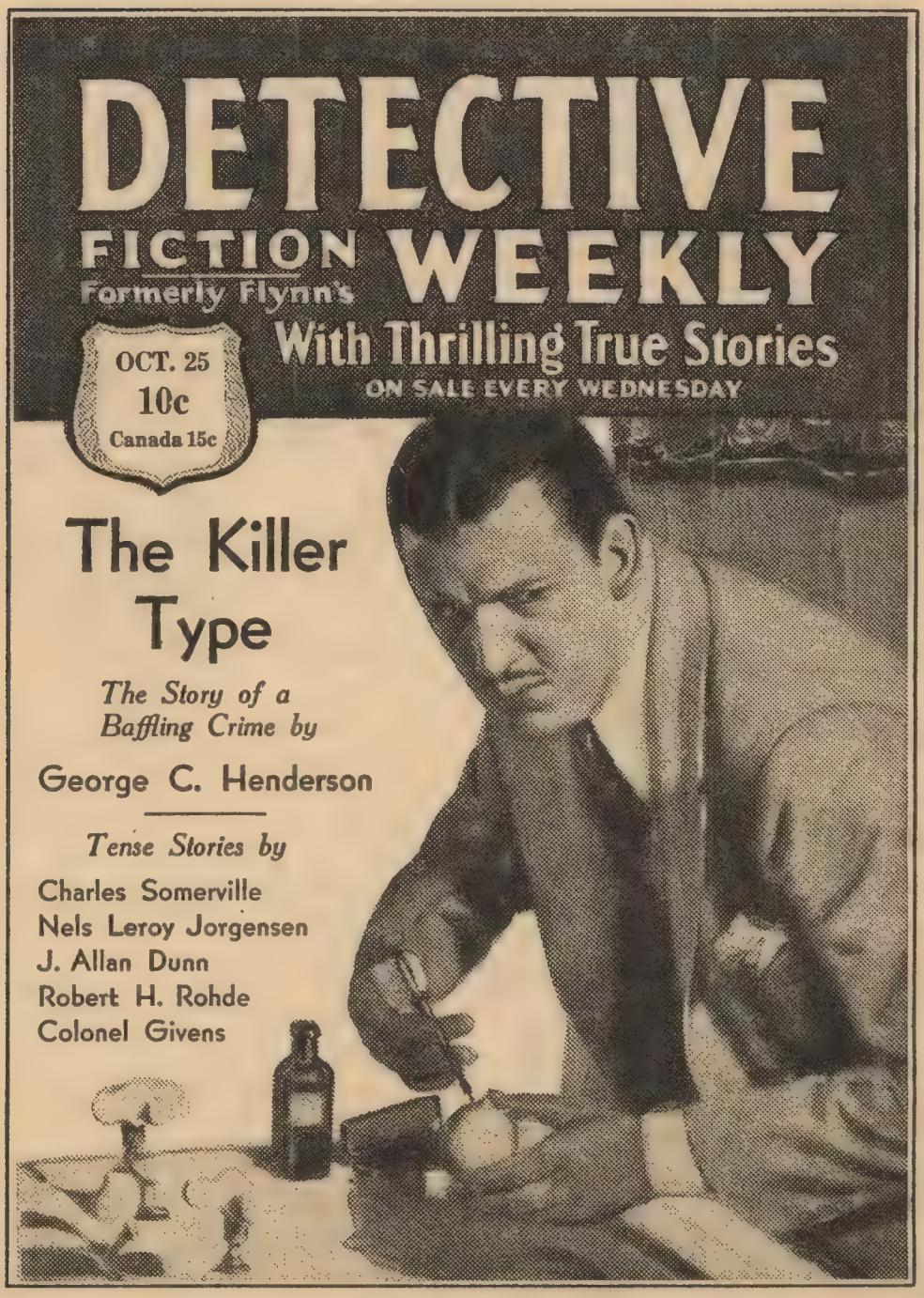

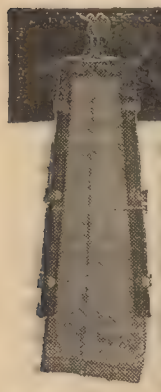

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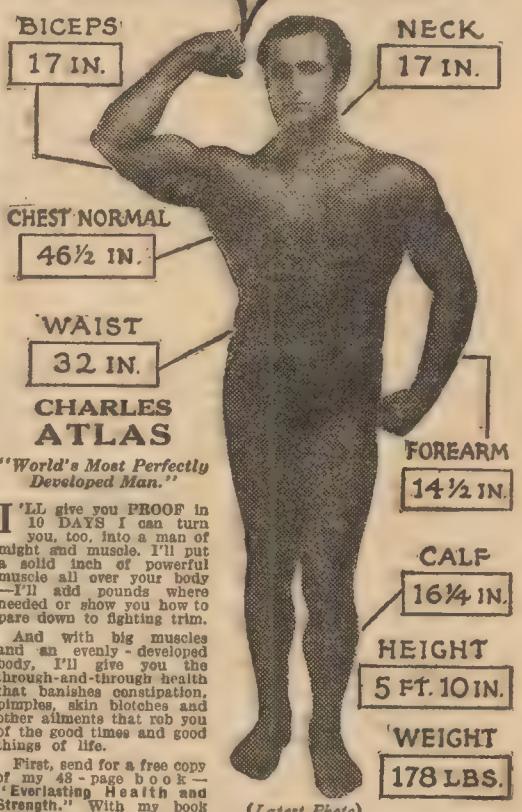

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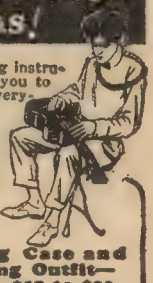

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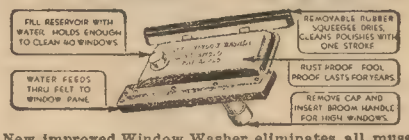
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VOLUME 216 | SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1930 | NUMBER 1

Jed sprang at the luckless officer

Tiger Dick's Doubloons

In the days when full-rigged ships sailed the Spanish Main, young Ned Allen set sail for the American colonies—and for as strange adventures as ever man met in those buccaneering times

By DON McGREW

Author of "Alexander the Red," "The Masked Barmaid," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE INN OF FEAR.

IT was in the year of 1775 that I finished my education in England, just in time to receive word that my father's Virginia estates had been confiscated by the colonial authorities because of his activities in the Sons of Liberty.

That was the reason for my presence on the Liverpool water front, with only a few shillings remaining in my possession; for I was looking for a chance to work my passage homeward. It likewise accounted for my temporary

abiding place in a little room under the gables of Jed Morgan's "Sign of the Anchor"—from the tiny window of which I could see Liverpool's horrid gibbets, stark against the evening sky; and it brought about my acquaintance with the huge, burly innkeeper who lived in such deadly fear of "a sea-going chap with a silvery whistle."

My landlord, Jed Morgan, had a visage to frighten a child into spasms at candlelight, and his bulk was tremendous.

I had seen him crack the heads of two hardy seamen between his hamlike palms as easily as you or I might have handled little children. Scarred, he was, and forbidding; a leathery man with bared forearms the thickness of ship's spars, and a truculent, battered countenance, frightful to behold. Yet I had spent but little time within the place when I discovered that this formidable giant was afraid of some one!

This truth became more and more apparent to me as the days passed. He never came over to your table without first looking toward the door; and once, when a naval officer ran in hurriedly to announce an accident across the way, Jed whirled like a flash and almost pinned the stranger to the wall.

Quicker than most men could wink he had produced a heavy, ugly knife; and there he stood, as white as chalk, with the knife aloft in his great hand, while the stranger stared at him with bulging eyes and dropped jaw.

Then Jed recovered himself, and the color returned to his heavy face in a wave. If ever a man looked foolish, it was Jed. He gave the roomful a surly glance, spat upon the floor, and stumped away to his back room.

Sitting at my table in the taproom at the time was an old, wind-roughened tar. He was an habitué of the place, who had told me he was looking for a berth at sea.

Tom Newgate was his name, and though Jed was the last man in the world to pose as a jovial landlord—seeming to have no intimates, and being downright surly with his customers—it appeared that he and Tom had been shipmates on some cruise or other, and Jed would occasionally call the old fellow into his private room.

HAVING struck up an acquaintance with the mild old seaman, I seized this chance to question him about our host.

"What," I demanded, "do you make of that?"

Old Newgate was past sixty, and wise with the ways of men ashore and afloat. His eyes twinkled and nearly disappeared in nutbrown wrinkles. He lifted a tar-stained hand with black, broken nails to a broad, stubby nose, and worked his ale glass around in circles with the other.

"Son," said he, staring into the ale, "maybe you think that man Jed is rough—and you ain't guessed wrong, not you. But there's men afloat as would make chicken meat o' Jed, and you may lay to it."

"They must be monsters, then!" I cried.

"Well, I has one in mind as is suthin' to keep a body awake o' nights," he said, rolling his quid.

"You mean the one that Jed's afraid of?"

"Now, how would I know?" the old fellow cried quickly, glancing about. Then he chuckled. "It's kind of funny, though," he confided. "I mean Jed bein' afraid. P'tickly when I thinks of what a sweet singin' angel Jed was hisself, at sea."

"It seems ridiculous for him to remain here as landlord of a public house if he's afraid of being found," I declared.

"That's the cream o' the joke, Mr. Allen. An old uncle left this to Jed. Jed, he's got the first sov'ring he ever earned. He could no more sell this here grog shop below a proper figger than you could twist your own mother's neck. At the same time he's atween the devil and the deep sea for fear this man will heave to in the offing afore he can sell the place."

"What sort of man does he fear?" I eagerly inquired, conjuring up the picture of a gorilla in human form.

"Son," said Newgate, "how would I know? Jed don't let his jaw tackle slip much, as you may have noticed. You might ask him yourself, though." And he grinned.

This by no means appealed to me. I was nearly six feet in height, but my head barely rose above Jed's shoulder. So for a time I was forced to content myself with conjectures in which Jed's scars conjured up pictures of blood-smeared decks and cutlasses clashing in terrific struggles for the prize within the hold.

Old Tom said that he had made but one cruise with the man, on a peaceful merchantman, but while Tom was not one you would have pictured as a pirate, it was easy enough to visualize Jed with a leg thrown over the bulwarks and a cutlas gripped between his powerful teeth. It was my guess that he had tricked some former messmate in the division of loot.

It was not until a week later that Jed finally called me aside on his own initiative and threw light upon the matter. The old guests had by then departed, and Tom had secured a berth aboard the Bonny Lee, then riding at anchor in the harbor and taking cargo aboard for Charleston.

I had tried to get a berth on this same Bonny Lee, only to be told that the crew was made up; and that same day I had told Jed that I must give up my lodgings because my funds were almost gone.

"Son," said he, lowering his voice to a husky, croaking pitch and looking round to be sure that no one overheard, "I thinks I knows a gentleman when I sees one. Now, you ain't had no luck shipping out, and within the week I expects to sell this here grog shop, lock, stock and barrel. I'm going to sail with old Tom on the Bonny Lee for the colonies, I am. You're a wanting food and lodging and a billet home, says you. Says I to you, 'I'm a needin' a little help. Suppose we trade?'"

There was an anxious, worried look which he could not keep from the depths of his shrewd, piglike eyes. Noting this, I said, a bit sharply, "That's according to the nature of the trade."

"Why, it's nothing that need worrit you, my hearty!" he hastened to assure me. "Ah, but I knows the ways of gentlemen, I does."

"All right, then," said I. "Let's have it."

THE perspiration suddenly stood out in great drops on his wrinkled, low forehead, and he seemed ashamed to meet my glance. At last he looked up with a half aggressive, half apologetic air, met my eye for an instant, and turned his head away. He seemed to be centering his vision upon some horrid memory of the past.

"I ain't no coward!" he croaked. "I ain't afeared o' storm at sea, nor any ten swabs as ever trod a deck. Not me, Mr. Allen. I've seen them as shook

at thought of a gibbet, and them as was a-scared to lean too far over the lee rail, because o' sharks; but I never seed the day I give a fig for man nor devil till—till this came on me."

He shuddered here, like a woman. "I'll own up square," he cried. "I'm squeamish o' snakes. Maybe that's why, 'cause he's got snake's blood in his veins, that I'm afeared o' this fellow Tiger Dick."

"The man you're watching for!" slipped from me.

"The same," he assented, more easily. He wiped his brow. "You've noticed; you ain't no fool, not you. Well, all you got to do is to help watch for him, d'y'see? You do that, and you'll have food and lodging, Mr. Allen, till such time as you puts your foot aboard a proper ship."

I thought it over a moment, and saw nothing in the transaction to trouble my conscience. "I'll do it," I agreed. "Only, what manner of man am I to watch for?"

"Thankee, sir!" he cried, in great relief. "And what manner o' man is he, says you? Why, he's a large, red-faced, black-eyed man, as large as me, is Tiger Dick. A man as could pass for a jolly chapling, or a hearty, honest squire, a handin' round juicy chunks o' beef to his tenants at a Candlemas barbecue. Ay, that's the man. Ten to one he'll be a whistlin', he will, so sweet as any mocking bird. Mind that. So sweet as any mocking bird."

"That's not much to go on," I said.

"Ah, but it is, sir. You never heard a whistle like it, and never will again. You'll not mistake him for a landsman, either. Nor that ain't all. I expects you'll see a seafarin' dwarf with him. A little, ugly dwarf."

Again Jed shuddered, and spat. "That dwarf is an ugly, twisted, snarling brute," he added. "So pleasant-lookin' as a black cloud heavin' up 'twixt ship and the home shore. Bruno is what Tiger Dick calls him, and they're seldom apart."

A few more details of description were given me, and I took up sentry duty on a chair just outside the door. Jed was in deadly fear that Tiger Dick might arrive while he—Jed—was "below decks," as he put it, tapping a new cask. In this case I was to stamp heavily—three times—upon the taproom floor.

FOR five days nothing happened, and as the hours wore away toward noon observation of the sixth it appeared that Jed had suffered his alarms for nothing, and that he would be standing safely out to sea before sundown that afternoon. The Bonny Lee was scheduled to sail with the evening tide.

It was just after lunch, as I remember well, of a fine, clear, cheery day, with the white clouds drifting by in a blue sky, and the quays alive with noisy trucks and drays, and the harbor a forest of tall masts that tapered to needle points, when I sighted the large, jovial seaman, with the gnarled dwarf trotting behind him, like a dog, two paces in his rear.

Jed was expecting the prospective purchaser of the inn at any moment, but had gone below to broach a cask. Tom Newgate had come ashore from the Bonny Lee for some duffle and was sitting in the taproom at the time, with half a dozen tarred seamen lolling near.

What with watching the longshoremen handling high piles of bales and barrels on the wharves, and giving half an ear to the lusty chant of open-breasted seamen who were pulling on a rope aboard the distant Bonny Lee, I

was not on the *qui vive,* and not immediately certain of Tiger Dick's identity.

The strange pair came quickly around the end of a dray, some distance off. The large man was not whistling. Then I saw them more clearly, and noted that both wore sailors' garb. My heart began to pound. They came a few steps nearer; and suddenly I arose, and whipped inside. With thunderous impact I brought my heel down three times upon the floor.

The half dozen sailors at the tables looked up with round eyes. Then something crashed below, and Jed came rushing up the stairs. His face was a mask of sickly white under his tan as he burst through the door, knife upraised.

"Where?" he gasped. "Where?"

He was too far back in the room to have my point of vantage, but I nodded toward the window through which I could see the dreaded pair approaching. As for myself, I was chiefly conscious of amazement.

The dwarf, Bruno, was indeed more repulsive than an ape. He swung along on crooked, oddly bent legs, his great, powerful, hairy hands dangling gorilla-like close to the walk. At each ungainly, rolling step he peered pugnaciously here and there from red-rimmed, ferocious eyes. These were overshadowed by coarse, black brows; his horrid face and body were fairly matted with thick, black hair; and the contrast he afforded to his master struck me as tragically absurd.

"Something," I thought, "must have addled poor Jed's pate a bit."

Never had I looked upon a more pleasant man than this great, neat, round-faced seaman in his trig suit of stout blue sea cloth, who carried his bulk with such a light and jaunty step. His round, full face was smooth, and fat, and very red, with a double chin; his wig was white as snow; and to add another touch of contrast to his color-scheme, his large eyes were black and soft as liquid. When he looked down at Bruno and revealed his teeth in a radiant smile, it warmed my heart.

It was the dwarf that Jed should have feared, I thought. As for the big seaman—who appeared to be about forty years of age—I would have been inclined to trust him anywhere.

Jed, on the other hand, quivered in such terror as one is loath to look upon.

Then as the pair came opposite the window, Tiger Dick suddenly threw back his head and began to whistle.

Whether it was at the third bar or the fourth I do not recall; but as I stood there, expecting I knew not what in the way of violence on the part of Jed, there was a crash behind me. I wheeled, and saw that Jed had fallen full length upon the floor.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN WHO WHISTLED.

THERE was a second or so of stunned silence in the taproom, before Tiger Dick appeared in the open doorway. He paused abruptly, and broke short off in his whistling. He was staring at the recumbent figure upon the sanded planks with a look of amazement.

At the same moment old Newgate and two others hurriedly moved to pick up the fallen man, while Bruno, the dwarf, began plucking at Dick's sleeve with one hand and pointing excitedly at Jed with the other. Meanwhile he chattered unintelligibly in a horrid jargon, and I sickened at sight of his mouth. His tongue had been cut out.

"Why, bless my soul, if it ain't my old shipmate, Jed!" Dick exclaimed, in a wondrously melodious voice. "Old Jed, as ever was. There, there, Bruno, be still; I understand. And old Tom Newgate! Well, shiver my sides, but this here's a happenstance. I didn't know that you came ashore, Tom. And what the devil's wrong with Jed, might I ask?"

Tom lowered Jed to a seat on a chair, and reached diffidently for his forelock. "Why, Mr. Buntline, it seems like he went and fainted when he heard you whistle, sir."

Dick was the picture of incredulity. "Now, fancy that!" he gasped. He inverted both thumbs and pointed at his breast. "You mean old Jed was afeared o' *me?*"

The man was pursy, so to speak, from good living, and appeared so good-natured and mild, and looked round at us with so comical an air that I could not help but chuckle. Whereupon he broke into laughter on his own account. It was laughter that doubled him over, caught up the whole assemblage with its contagion, and ended with him gasping for breath upon a chair.

"That roaring old typhoon afeared o' *me!*" he gasped. "I never heared the beat." But a second later found him sobering. "Are you sure he was right aloft, Tom?"

Before Tom could answer, another man removed his hand from Jed's breast.

"Why, see here!" the fellow cried. "Jed ain't fainted. He's on the long shore."

"He is, and no mistake!" breathed Tom Newgate, crossing himself.

I saw at a glance that this was true: the color had drained from Jed's blue face, and the mouth gaped slackly in death. Fright had paralyzed his rum-soaked heart.

Dick stood stock-still for a second or two, his mouth agape. Then he moved toward the dead man. I had never seen a big man move so quickly and so noiselessly.

"He's gone to his last home, sure enough!" he exclaimed in a shocked voice. Hurriedly he crossed himself and looked round at us, his round face concerned. "Now, lookee here, gentlemen," he cried. "You've heard Tom Newgate say as how Jed here was afeared o' me. This here is a rum go for me, this is. But you'll bear witness, one and all, that I was never so much as in the room when poor Jed dived hatches under—won't you, now?"

"I could, but I think it's our cue to budge, mates, afore the coroner puts his oar in," returned a tall, sallow-faced seaman, moving uneasily toward the door. "You know how these courts are. Well, then, this here ain't no affair o' mine; leastwise I can't nowise see it that way; so I'm for the open air, mates."

"Me, too," said another; and all save Tom Newgate, the frightened boy-of-all-work, and myself made themselves scarce, leaving Dick and the silent dwarf to face their dilemma.

One knowing the circumstances could hardly blame them. Although there was no wound of any sort upon Jed's slack body, the stolid British authorities had a way of holding witnesses incommunicado until they were certain that "there was no bottom to come at."

I SAW myself being held with the rest, my circumstances inquired into, and the possibility of impressment aboard a British ship as an unemployed colonial subject without

means of support; and I was on the point of following, when Tiger Dick Buntline spoke up.

"I saw you jump back inside the door," said he. "Come now, was you a warning of Jed?"

"Why, yes," I replied, seeing no reason for quibbling.

"And why?" he wanted to know.

I told him, briefly enough, of my strange compact with Jed, and the reasons for it.

"Crazy he must have been, plain crazy!" sighed Dick, wiping his brow with a silk handkerchief. "Here, though: this ain't shipshape, this ain't. You, boy," addressing the stupid yokel whom Jed had employed about the place, "you hop it for the coroner, double quick. Here's a golden sov'ring for your trouble, my lad."

The boy was off on the run, and immediately Dick turned and seized my lapel between thumb and forefinger.

"Mate," he said pleadingly, while the sweat stood out on his brow, "here's a fine lay for an innocent man, now ain't it? There goes that boy with next to my last sov'ring, so help me. Here's a mate sick on the Bonny Lee, bound out on the tide this very afternoon as ever was for Charleston—and me signed up to take that mate's berth. Through a tip from Tom, here, this very noon. Now, if that ain't tough, then scuttle me. Hey, Tom?"

"Tough?" said Tom. "I reckon it's tough, sir. Tough ain't no name for it."

It was all confusing to me. I could not reconcile Jed's fears with my impression of Tiger Dick; the name, it seemed to me, must have been given by way of a joke; and Dick read my face easily enough and profited by it.

"We're in a clove hitch, we two," he declared. "We three, in fact. You know how they'll hold you for a witness. If you tell that story to a coroner, why, like as not, they'll hold me a year till they can get—well, the Lord knows what they'll do. Suppose, now, we budge. Tom was telling me of you this very noon, as ever was. Suppose I gets you a berth aboard the Bonny Lee?"

I hesitated. Something warned me, but the voice was very faint. Why, I asked myself, was I in any way obligated to languish in a cell till the high-handed, muddling authorities concluded their red-tape investigations? Moreover, the man had done nothing in my presence to merit the loss of his billet.

"Don't hang in stays, Mr. Allen!" urged Dick. "Time's passing."

"Are you sure you can place me aboard?" I returned. "I tried that vessel this week, and Captain Fogg—that is correct, isn't it?—told me he was full up."

"If that's all that's bothering you," said Dick, linking his arm in mine and urging me toward the door, "let's go. Supercargo is wot I have in mind, my lad. You're an educated gentleman; I seed that the minute I laid eyes on you. Looking for a supercargo was what I came down street for. What luck! Lord strike me pink, but here we go, four good colonials"—here he lowered his voice—"and to hell with his majesty and all his tax collectors, is what I say."

"Amen to that!" I echoed fervently.

So that's how I shipped aboard the Bonny Lee, and got clear away with the tide that same afternoon without having sighted a bailiff or learning what befell when the gawping boy of all work returned with the coroner. It was a great relief to me when I heard our tar-stained, weather-beaten salts

tramping round the capstan with Dick singing:

"Yo ho ho! A sailing go we—
Yo ho ho! For the High Barbaree,
As jolly a lot of tars, lads, as ever
put to sea!"

At each final "ho!" the men sang out in unison and shoved the bars before them. Not long afterward the anchor was up snug, and we were going about and about between the buoys, with the gruesome gibbets growing smaller and smaller in our eyes as we left them astern, and our bows treading musically upon the waters as we headed for the blue and smiling sea. Dangerous as sea voyages are apt to be, I watched with delighted eyes the foaming combers spreading away from our prow, and inhaled deeply, enjoying to the full the tang of the salt air. Little did I dream that I was to encounter, not only storm at sea, but adventures that were to shape the course of my whole life.

CHAPTER III.

A BLACK SHIP OF WAR.

FOR a time there was no incident in that outward voyage worth recording. The Bonny Lee was a trig and well-founded Yankee schooner, beautifully rigged alow and aloft, and painted in reds and whites. Ah, but there was a combination of beauty and seaworthiness!

She had been built in Boston, sat the water like a swan, and carried a heavy, miscellaneous cargo without materially lessening her speed. A breath would set her moving, and every man in a contented crew was in love with her.

Cap'n Fogg was a worthy commander of that bonny craft, too. He was a spare, stern Yankee, somewhere in his late forties, and an incisive man when giving a command; but he was just and fair, and not at all niggardly with his duff. As we skimmed along under full sail, it seemed that we were destined to make Charleston after as fine a voyage as ever was made by a happy and competent crew.

A riffle did appear one day upon our serene horizon, of which I must make mention. Engaged at the last hour, as I was, to replace a supercargo who disappeared ashore, I labored for a time under the impression that our cargo was correctly described in the manifest. This listed everything from plows to rolls of silk.

To all intents and purposes the Bonny Lee was bent on delivering to the troublesome colonies nothing but legitimate articles, for peaceful usage. Nor did I discover my error until, being in the hold when some boxes marked "Plowshares" were being moved for better storage, one of them was accidentally dropped. I saw then that the broken box contained muskets!

"Might 've known something like that would happen!" grunted Cap'n Fogg. "Well, so be it." He took me aside. "Now that you know they're aboard, my lad," said he, "I'll tell you they're for the Sons of Liberty. I don't go in for smuggling, as a rule, but this is different."

"You can count on me for silence, sir!" I assured him fervently—for I would have helped any one, at any risk, to smuggle contraband in the name of liberty.

"I'm sure of that," said he. "As for the crew, they're not all good colonials. But"—here he looked at me shrewdly—"I reckon that a few pounds among 'em will put their tongues in their cheeks."

This discovery gave me cause for worry, now and again; for whenever a strange sail appeared on the horizon, I wondered if we were to be overhauled by a British man-o'-war. Yet this was only at first. As Tiger Dick pointed out, the Bonny Lee could show a clean pair of heels to any man-o'-war afloat.

In the meantime Tiger Dick seemed to justify my impressions of his character. No better seaman ever set foot upon a holystoned deck. He was firm enough with his men, but I never saw him resort to bullying. He could make even the superstitious smile with the cheery, wondrously catchy tunes that he whistled when the mood was on him; he seemed never to lose his temper, and he was consistently brisk and cheerful; and within a week Cap'n Fogg was ready to swear by him.

I could quite understand that, for Dick not only performed his work well; he knew how to soothe Cap'n Fogg when that peppery individual's ire rose; and he could do it, too, without appearing to fawn.

Never have I seen a man with more eloquent eyes than Dick's. Something keenly alive and dynamic burned deep in their liquid, dark depths. They would twinkle with appreciation of a joke, shine with gratitude, gleam with quick understanding, mist in sympathy so quickly and so unmistakably that the man could have conversed, it seemed, without a tongue.

NO man ever had a more sympathetic listener than Cap'n Fogg enjoyed in his mate when the skipper opened up on his favorite topic—the injustice of the British authorities in their dealings with the colonies.

"Took my own schooner, the Mary Jane, not nine months agone," he would say, "on the pretext that she was carrying contraband." And he would snort viciously. "No more than a pair of French gold scales aboard her, too. Seized her, by gum. Not a penny redress. Threatened to put me in jail. Is that justice? Is that fairness?"

"Pirates is what they are, the whole kit an' boiling of 'em!" Dick would reply.

Thus we sailed on, with Cap'n Fogg's hatred of the British burning fiercely, and Dick standing higher and higher in the skipper's estimation each day; while Bruno, the dwarf, carried on as a servant to his master and also did full duty as a member of the crew.

He was a remarkable seaman, too, that dwarf. Handicapped by his twisted legs, his arms were developed to unbelievable proportions. He could mount a line hand over hand as fast as others ran up the shrouds.

Mostly he kept to himself when off duty; he seemed to care for no living man on earth save Dick; and the men soon learned to let him be. One seaman who was bent on teasing him was only saved by Dick when the ugly little man leaped and wrapped an arm like a steel gyve about the astounded sailor's throat. An instant more and he would have choked the pop-eyed joker to death.

"You must remember that Bruno isn't quite right in the head, and has the strength of three," warned Dick, in a confidential aside to a group of the men. "You'd be half cracked, too, like as not, if you'd been catched by Indians off Panama. It was there he lost his tongue and got his legs all shriveled up with fire. 'Twas me who saved him, d'y'see, these many years gone. That's why he dotes on me. He's no more harm than a dog, is Bruno, if you let him be."

I had grown to think so on my own

account, by the time we fell into bad weather. A man's repulsive externals grow less revolting after longer acquaintance, and there was something pathetic in Bruno's attitude toward Dick. Ofttimes I have watched his red-rimmed eyes follow the mate about the deck with a look in the depths of them as tender as that in the eyes of a faithful, loving dog.

Then the storms struck us, and the whole complexion of the voyage changed. Worse went to worse. Cholera broke out aboard us; we were blown far to southward of our course; and June found us nearing the edge of the Caribbean.

Death had reduced our crew of twenty-one to seven men. Only Cap'n Fogg, Tiger Dick, Bruno, Tom Newgate, Abe Kemp, Jerry Coffin and myself remained alive. We had rammed a submerged derelict, too, and had sprung a bad leak forward, so that all were worn and weary with hard labor at the pumps.

"And have you made up your mind yet which island you'll put in for, sir?" I overheard Dick inquiring of Cap'n Fogg one afternoon as the worried skipper bent over his charts, busy with pencil and dividers.

"I was wishin' one would pop up out of the sea off our bows!" the captain exploded. "At this rate, we'll be lucky to reach any. I was thinking, though, of Quanto Bello."

"You've been there?" Dick asked, rather quickly.

The captain said no; it was merely that the charts showed that island to be the nearest from our present position.

"Right you are, sir," said the mate, looking at the map. "Only, there ain't a spot on Quanto Bello where you can careen and calk handy. Coral everywhere. I've been there. By your leave, sir, I'd say Camano would be best. Good anchorage there; good water; nice inland harbor, and an easy sloping beach. It's only a few leagues farther, too."

"CAMANO?" said the skipper, frowning. "Don't much like to enter there. We might fall in with pirates."

"Not now, sir, I shouldn't think."

"Why, I've a chart of the place. It was given to me by a friend—a court recorder—just after they tried George Avery for piracy in Boston, these five years back. The pirate had it in his effects."

"I saw the man swinging in chains, near the old south buoy," said Tiger Dick, crossing himself. "You've got the right of it that far, sir. 'Twas on Camano Island George built his blockhouses. Two years ago I was in that there bay—Hangman's Bay, they said 'twas called."

"Yes, it's so named in the chart."

"Well, sir, the blockhouses was there then. No signs o' buccaneers, though. 'Tain't in reason that pirates would put in there to stay any time, not since George Avery's story got around."

"That's reasonable, too," agreed the captain.

Thus, through the suggestion of Tiger Dick, we headed for the landlocked harbor on Camano Island, the former pirates' stronghold. There, under the lee of the tall hills on that uninhabited island, we planned to beach, careen and calk.

We bore away steadily thereafter on the new tack, our leaking schooner forming the center of a great circle in which no other mast appeared. For weeks we had not sighted so much as a tops'l on the horizon, and for a time we

thought that we would reach Camano without having encountered another craft. But about six bells, on a fine, clear forenoon, with the bare peak of Tops'l Hill showing above the white clouds to westward, but several leagues still between us and our goal, we made out a low-lying, black hulk, westbound like ourselves, and plowing slowly through the waters between us and Hangman's Bay!

"A damned pirate, like as not!" Cap'n Fogg groaned lugubriously.

Tiger Dick had come running on deck, and stood beside the skipper peering eagerly through his glass. To the naked eye the strange ship ahead of us was but a blot upon the water.

"Well, sir, if she *is* a pirate, she's in bad shape," said Dick. "That bit of white you see is nought but a jury rig. She ain't got a stick left in her, she ain't."

"Then I'll stand in closer," Cap'n Fogg decided.

Coming closer, we saw that Dick had spoken truly. The dismasted vessel wallowed along through the glassy, tropical ground swells with but a patch of sail forward. We also saw that she was flying British colors.

"Which doesn't go for much," the skipper grunted. "Easy enough to break out the Union Jack till prey's close in. Then—pop!—out comes the Jolly Roger."

There was, of course, no assurance that buccaneers were not hidden below the decks of the stranger, and we were made doubly suspicious by the fact that the dark vessel was armed and heading straight for Camano. The six nine-pounders on our own ship appeared puny in comparison to the eight heavy black guns our glasses picked out upon the other craft's deck. Some of these we judged to be eighteen-pounders.

"There's this to consider, though," said Tiger Dick, regarding the hulk frowningly: "most ships have guns o' some sort. There's fine, tall trees on Camano, too. Maybe yon craft is just a merchantman who figures to put in and ship new sticks."

Conceding that this was possible, Cap'n Fogg held to his course. Even if there were pirates aboard, they could not maneuver to board us with that jury rig.

"I hope, though," said he, "that she has a good honest crew aboard." He sighed, for our leak was spreading, and we were in the last stages of fatigue. "If that's the case," he concluded, "maybe they'll be glad to trade. Hands for my pumps in return for a tow to Hangman's Bay."

WE stood directly, then, toward the low hull, and steadily overhauled her till our glasses caught the name on her stern. Some one had aptly christened her the Vulture.

Relieved as I was by the hope of aid, there was something depressing about that ship which made itself felt despite the distance between us. A decrease in this distance only heightened the sinister impression. Aside from the bit of sail on the jury mast forward, there was hardly a trace of white to alleviate the black of her long, low hull.

"There's something about that craft that I don't like," I remarked.

"So?" said Dick, lowering his own glass. "Well, she ain't no picture, I'll admit. There's suthin' odd about her, though."

"What's that, sir?"

"Why, my son, she ain't flyin' no signal o' distress. I'd call that mighty queer."

"Damned queer," muttered Cap'n Fogg.

As we came still closer in, the strange ship continued to head for Camano Island without showing signs that she was aware of our existence. We could in no wise fathom this, because there was always the risk of the wind changing, and under jury rig the dismasted vessel could hardly hope to wear in unaided.

"Plenty o' people aboard, too, which would have to be fed that much longer if that breeze shifts," said Cap'n Fogg, finally, after another look through his telescope.

Puzzled as we were by this continued aloofness, we were the more intrigued when we thrust our bowsprit within hailing distance. A bulwark divided the after part of the deck from the waist and fo'c's'le. A carved white vulture spread its wooden wings under her sprit; and we saw now that there were British redcoats and prisoners aboard. She was a convict ship!

"Now what in the name o' Davy Jones would a convict ship be doing in these waters, sir?" muttered Dick.

"What I was thinkin'," returned our puzzled, gray-haired skipper. "There ain't but one convict colony, and that's Botany Bay, Australey."

None of us had an answer to the conundrum. Convict ships were almost invariably routed round the Cape of Good Hope when bound for Australia. But in a moment Cap'n Fogg sought a direct answer by raising a megaphone and bellowing, "Where bound?"

We were near enough now to see the figures on the quarter-deck clearly. I noted particularly a slender, foppish chap, leaning nonchalantly against the rail. He was puffing, with an air of boredom, at a long-stemmed, dainty pipe. He outrivaled Beau Brummel in attire, and he eyed our colonial crew with the lazy, contemptuous stare so characteristic of his type. I hated him and his ilk, and had placed him in my black books before I learned his name.

IT was not this man who answered, but the ship's master, Captain Bradbury. A beefy, red-faced, thickset man, he regarded Cap'n Fogg frostily and deigned to reply:

"We're bound for Camano Island to ship new masts, as any but a Yankee fool could guess. Or maybe you thought as 'ow we were 'eading in to pick flowers—eh, wot?"

The blood thickened in Fogg's lean, sallow cheeks. "I don't give a hoot in Gehenny what you intend to do there!" he ripped out in his shrill nasal tones. "Maybe you hear my pumps a goin'; leastwise your ears are big enough! I've only seven left aboard. Gimme hands for my pumps and I'll tow you in."

"Be damned to you, twice over!" bellowed the red-faced Britisher, swelling mightily. "When I need 'elp, I'll jolly well ask for it, you insolent beggar."

Immediately Cap'n Fogg shoved over the helm, and we veered away, with the two old seadogs exchanging volleys of Billingsgate till both were purple in the face. Meanwhile I could hardly restrain a groan. It was almost time for me to take another turn at the pumps, and I wondered whether I could stick it out.

"Don't you peg out, lad!" whispered Dick behind his upraised palm. "Them hands o' yours are main sore, and no mistake. I'll spell you for an hour."

Small wonder that I had grown fond of the man by this time! All through our troubles he had been like that—a

man almost incapable of fatigue, ever ready to spell one of his worn crew, ever ready with a cheerful, heartening word, and as tender as a nurse with the dying men. You may be sure I thanked him heartily with a look as Cap'n Fogg stopped swearing at the Britisher.

"The bigoted old blighter doesn't want us near!" he stormed. "There's something under this won't bear inspection."

"My thought, as ever was," Dick agreed.

Not long afterward, the wind veered, and Cap'n Fogg shook his bony fist at the Vulture in high delight. He had not long to laugh, however. That leak was getting out of hand. We now had small hopes of reaching Camano Island on our own account. Cap'n Fogg was, on this account, forced to come down a peg when Bradbury finally signaled for aid.

"Had to come to it, didn't ye?" Fogg taunted, when we once more neared the Vulture.

"Wasn't for these lives aboard, you'd never had a chance to rub it in!" Captain Bradbury sulkily retorted.

So it was in a sort of sullen truce that we heaved them a line.

CHAPTER IV.

A REDCOAT'S GRATITUDE.

WHILE they were lowering a boat to send soldiers and convicts aboard, Cap'n Fogg bluntly asked the British sailing master why he was taking the stormy course around the Horn.

"Well," came the gruff reply, "it's none o' your blasted business, but I 'ave cargo for Buenos Aires."

"What do you think o' that?" Fogg asked Dick.

"Why, sir, it's my guess—by the rod—that you could put all his Buenos Aires cargo in your blooming eye."

"Aye, and I'd give a deal to know what's up," added the skipper.

I was myself intrigued and puzzled. There was nothing impossible in Bradbury's insolent explanation, but it was not at all convincing. About the black hull of the gloomy convict ship there hung an air of mystery which was not traceable to the frowning, black muzzles of eight long toms aboard her, ranged in batteries of four on either side; and Bradbury's manner only tended to heighten it.

But there was nothing to be gained by puzzling over the matter; and, indeed, my own thoughts concerning it were diverted soon afterward by the sight of Dick, standing at the rail. He was staring hard at the Vulture's longboat, coming up under our counter, and he was laboring under sudden excitement.

"Keelhaul me!" he muttered as I came quietly up behind him. "Can that be Bellew? Long Tom Bellew? So help me Davy Jones, it *is* Long Tom Bellew!"

"Were you talking to me, Mr. Buntline?" I inquired.

He started as though he had not been conscious of my proximity. "Why, no," he returned, giving me a brief, sharp look, followed by a quick and disarming smile. "I was taken aback, Mr. Allen, that's all. By the rod, and you'd be, too. Fancy seein' an old shipmate come to that!"

He shook his great head sadly, and pointed out a man in the boat below us. It was that of a convict, tall and windblown, with a scar on one cheek, and a remarkably long nose.

Though he and his comrades wore the white convict garb, with red ar-

rows spangled over the unshapely blouses and trousers, a child of ten could have picked Bellew for a former seafaring man. Life in the crowded, festering hold of the Vulture had not served to lessen the tan on his leathery skin, nor to have wiped the marks of the sea from eleven others of the convicts in the boat.

The other eight were landsmen, showing the pallor of London's slums.

"And where did you know him?" I inquired.

Before I could receive an answer, Long Tom looked up from his oar and saw Tiger Dick. The man's jaw dropped. He missed a stroke, and was cursed by the Vulture's first mate.

Bellew's green eyes dropped, and he bent to the oar with a will. Yet, at the same time, I saw others among those ex-seamen in convict garb glance up at our rail. On the countenances of several I noted unmistakable signs of amazed recognition.

Instantly the memory of Jed came flooding back to me. While Long Tom Bellew's evil, bleary face was that of a man who would resort to trickery and fawning first to gain an end, he struck me as one who would take to a cutlass as quick as winking. So, too, with the other eleven ex-seamen. With their earrings and their blue tattoo marks, they were a rough lot in appearance, and no mistake.

Tiger Dick must have sensed my thoughts, for at once he said: "Lor' bless me, but this here's a pretty go! Why, there's Joe Darby, and Horse Andrews. Hardy Flintlock, too, as ever was. They sailed under me in the old Mermaid—the old Green Mermaid, out of Bristol, these three years back. I was first mate, Cap'n Lamb's first mate, and Long Tom, there, was quartermaster. And now I find them here! By the rod, I reckon that's tough. What do you suppose brought them to this?"

"Well, sir, since you've asked me, I wouldn't be surprised if it was piracy," was my answer.

HE regarded me in sidelong fashion, with derision twinkling in his half shut eyes. "Piracy, says you? Why, my lad, there's only one dose the king has for gentlemen o' fortune, and that's a rigadoon at a rope's end on Execution Dock, by thunder! Piracy, my Aunt Mary's foot! Them men are honest enough, as honesty goes these days. And you've been eddicated at Oxford! Don't you know that more than a full half of them poor lads aboard that hell ship has been sent to Botany Bay for nothin' more serious than lifting a pigeon pie?"

I was forced to grant this. Many poor devils were being sent to the "Land Down Under" for seven years' penal servitude for such heinous crimes as striking for a shilling a day more on their pay! And Dick followed his advantage by a withering:

"Why, Mr. Allen, I'm surprised at you! After what King George did to your poor father, you're willing to think the worst of poor devils as wears a convict's clothes? What do that old buzzard care if he stamps a man as a criminal the rest of his days, so he builds up a colony down under? Now you mark my words: I'll ask that there officer so soon as they come over the side, I will. Piracy, my eye!"

The convicts, with a half dozen burly, rum-faced redcoats following them up the companionway, were soon on deck. After them came one Downes, the Vulture's first mate, and a tall, ruddy infantry officer who introduced himself as Lieutenant Abercrombie.

"These men are to work your

pumps," he said stiffly to Cap'n Fogg, looking them and us over with a cold, distant eye.

Cap'n Fogg's cheeks burned, and I knew that he longed to smite the insufferable young whippersnapper a blow across the mouth. For myself, I raged inwardly with a similar longing. Dissipated, and not overly intelligent in appearance, he nevertheless made it plain by his very manner that we were so much scum in his estimation. But Cap'n Fogg restrained himself, merely saying:

"Mr. Buntline, you'll take 'em below and divide 'em into watches for the pumps."

"Aye, aye, sir," returned Dick. "There's a question, though, I'd like to ask this officer, by your leave." He hooked a thumb at Long Tom Bellew. "That man sailed under me once, sir. Would you mind telling me what brought him to the brig?"

"Why," Abercrombie deigned to answer, coldly, "it was smuggling, if you want to know. He and eleven shipmates were sentenced at Old Bailey together."

"Thankee, sir," said Dick, throwing a triumphant and reproachful look at me. Then, as he started below, Abercrombie turned to Cap'n Fogg and extended a paper.

"A king's warrant to seize and search—if you can't read," he said, insultingly. "Captain Bradbury's orders that I shall search your ship."

"Which maybe will teach you not to loosen your jaw tackle so quick next time," the mate, Downes, leered nastily.

MY heart dropped like a plummet as I thought of those guns below. As for Cap'n Fogg I thought he would suffer a stroke of apoplexy.

"Search my ship after signaling for help?" he thundered. "Why, damn your eyes, I—"

"Save your breath, my man!" Lieutenant Abercrombie interrupted. "We'll go below immediately, and you'll let me see your manifest."

Cap'n Fogg suddenly subsided, with a sick air. He told me to produce the manifest, which I did; and when the Britishers had gone below, he remained leaning listlessly against the rail. It struck me to the heart to see him suddenly look so old and gray.

"We'll find some way out of it, sir!" I whispered, hotly.

"We've mighty few hands against such odds, my son," he returned, sadly, staring off to sea.

Raging inwardly as I was, I could not see any way out of our dilemma just then; and, Abercrombie and Downes having taken some of the convicts to assist them, they soon returned on deck. Abercrombie was smiling faintly and sourly.

"You'll be so good as to turn over your ship to your mate for a time," said he. "You and your supercargo are going aboard the Vulture with me."

Cap'n Fogg told me to summon the mate, and I went immediately below. There were but two of the soldiers maintaining an indifferent guard there, one being asleep on some bales; and Dick was talking to Long Tom Bellew at a distance from the pumps when I found him. His eyes were shining strangely.

"I saw them open the boxes," he said, when I spoke, giving his head a gloomy shake. But he accompanied this with a covert wink which mystified me. And no sooner were we out of earshot of the lounging guards than he seized my arm in a tense grip.

"You tell Cap'n Fogg not to grieve,"

he whispered sharply. "You'll say, 'Dick has a scheme, he has.' That's what you'll say. Seize his ship, will they? Well, we'll see. No, no more. Just tell him Dick has a scheme, and not to worry."

Mystified and thrilled, I followed him on deck, and was soon aboard the Vulture's long boat with Cap'n Fogg.

CHAPTER V.

TYRANTS OF THE CONVICT SHIP.

ON our way to the Vulture, dragging heavily astern of the Bonny Lee, a garrulous British seaman plied me with questions and in turn gave me information of conditions aboard the convict ship.

The redcoats under Abercrombie numbered but fifteen. Nineteen tars comprised the ship's crew, while of the sixty-odd convicts who started the voyage only thirty-eight had survived an epidemic of typhoid and cholera in the crowded, poorly ventilated hold. Of these, thirty-one were men and the remainder women.

"A rotten, beastly w'y to treat any human beings. I don't care what they've done," the young seaman assured me in guarded tones. "No more convict ships for me, says I. By thunder, but that hold is fit to make you sick. Crowded like sardines, they is."

I was pulling an oar beside the man in the fore seat; Abercrombie, Downes and Cap'n Fogg were in the stern sheets; and I lowered my own voice.

"See here," I ventured to inquire, "what's this ship doing off her course?"

"You ask me another!" he replied, quickly. "It's what a lot of us is asking. We started down the coast of Africa, all regular like, d'y'see. Then what does skipper do but change and point her nose due west."

So that was the case! Cap'n Bradbury's explanation had been a downright lie. Cargoes for Buenos Aires are not routed down the African coast, or picked up in mid-ocean. Something of vital importance had occurred *en route* to make him change his course from the regular route around the Cape of Good Hope to one that must take him the much longer trek around the turbulent Horn.

"What explanation did he give?" I eagerly whispered.

The seaman snorted. "Fancy a hazing skipper like 'im giving any explanation. My eye!"

By this time we were alongside, and had no further chance for conversation till, arriving on deck, I was left standing in the waist, on the port side, while Cap'n Fogg was ushered aft into Bradbury's cabin.

For a moment or two I stood there alone, staring curiously about me, but particularly through the grating in the great oaken door which formed part of the head-high bulkhead amidships. Near this, on the inner side, stood a sentry, but his position did not prevent me from seeing part of the forward deck. Several prisoners were working there under a bo's'n's direction, some painting a gig, others slushing the deck.

Their wan, drawn faces fascinated me, and I was speculating idly upon what had brought this or that one to this pass when the sentry opened the door and a prisoner came through it. Instantly my eyes fastened upon her face, I was conscious of a profound shock.

"That girl going to Botany Bay?" was my amazed thought. "Impossible!"

She wore upon her slender ankle the usual ugly leg iron, and carried, over one shoulder, a chain which ran from the leg iron and ended in a ten-pound ball. Without looking at me, she moved to the rail near by, between two gigs, lowered this ball to the deck, and stared moodily out to sea.

I was astounded, puzzled, shaken to the core of me by the horror and the pity of it. Why, the girl was patrician! Generations of gentle breeding were traced in the delicately etched lines of her aquiline features.

I LOOKED about; the deck was temporarily deserted; and without thought of consequence I spoke impulsively.

"Miss," said I, "what devil's luck brought you here?"

"Stealing," she said laconically then—and turned her eyes once more to seaward.

Color flooded my cheeks. I felt angry, rebuffed. I was ever quick to anger, and about to say something sharp and cutting, when shame overcame me.

"Pray believe me when I say that I did not ask out of casual curiosity," I exclaimed, contritely. "You can't lie to me, either. You never stole a farthing!"

Briefly she smiled at me, and dropped me a tantalizing curtsy. "Ah, but I did, though!" she declared. "It was my own money, I felt—but British law is British law!"

"Do tell me!" I urged.

She looked aft. "You're from that ship ahead, aren't you?" she said. "Well, you must learn that it's against the rules to speak to convicts. I'm waiting here for a most kindly gentleman—a sweet, lovely person, I assure you." Oh, what a wealth of sarcasm and bitterness there was in her tones! "If he appears and sees you you will be in trouble."

"Is it," I cried, "that tall Beau Brummel?" And I described the foppish chap I had seen upon the poop.

"The same," she answered. "They call him Beau Tyron."

"Devil take him!" quoth I. "I'd risk double and treble trouble for your story."

Her fascinating lashes dropped. "Methinks," she said, demurely, "that you come from Virginia. And have not always sailed before the mast."

"Tell my fortune some more!" I breathed delightedly.

"Then you *did* come from dear Virginia?" she cried, in equal delight. Then her eyes brimmed. "Ah, dear, dear country that I'll not see for seven long years—if ever!"

"You'll see it soon—if I have my way!" I fiercely promised.

Her eloquent eyes thanked me briefly, but in the same breath seemed to say, "What on earth can you do?" After another look aft, she said quickly:

"My name is Gwendolyn Leigh. My father was a Tory, you see, and with all the seditious talk about, and Sons of Liberty forming, and an only daughter who would rather be a good colonial than the queen's lady-in-waiting—why, the poor man was fair distracted. 'Damme, miss!'" she imitated his frightful scowl, "'I'll make a good Britisher out of you if I die for it, you ungrateful huzzy!' said he. So, when he died, three years ago, there was his will, packing me off to England, bag and baggage."

The will, she explained, contained a stipulation which made an aunt heir to the estate if the girl rebelled and left England voluntarily. It was likewise

to revert to the aunt if Gwendolyn married any other than a loyal British subject.

"And you refused to marry that fop Tyron!" I guessed heatedly.

"Yes," she admitted.

HER lip curled as she described him as a baronet, an officer of the Guards—in short, a drunken, roistering, dandified duelist, typical of his times.

"It was he," she said, looking out to sea, "who caught me taking what I looked on as part of my own money. From my aunt, you know. So I could return to my own country."

"Whereupon the dog told your aunt?" I cried thickly.

"Not before offering me marriage as an alternative. After that, he told her. So one word led to another, and when I told my aunt I'd rather be a servant girl in the colonies than marry a rum-swilling, bigoted, insufferable British baronet—presto! She sent for the bailiff." The girl's head tossed, and she added, "I told the beefy, red-faced, white-wigged British judge even more—and la! You should have seen his very spectacles fall off!" But her smile was brief. "He sentenced me to seven years in Botany Bay."

"Damnable!" I gritted. "What's Tyron doing here, though?"

"In minor crimes, if a loyal British subject wishes to marry one of us, the woman can be freed on probation. He's obtained leave, and that's why I'm sent out here about every day—at his pleasure."

I was digesting this, and muttering sulphurous curses beneath my breath, when we were startled by a sudden commotion on the forward deck.

Through the grating I saw that one wan, slender prisoner had upset a bucket of paint. The bo's'n was now falling upon the man, cursing viciously. He aimed a murderous kick at the shackled prisoner's stomach, knocking him violently to the deck. Following this, a heavy-footed brute of an infantryman kicked the writhing man again and again as he lay defenseless.

Near by was standing another convict whose resemblance to the poor victim was striking. There was something wistful, something æsthetic, something martyr-like about the finely drawn countenances of those two brothers. The face of the standing convict fairly blazed with horror and indignation; and, weak as he appeared, he leaped to his brother's aid with nothing in his hand but a paintbrush.

The ensuing mêlée fairly set my teeth to grinding. It was not merely that the bo's'n and the soldier knocked the pallid weakling down; it was the sheer delight they evinced while jumping upon both prone figures with their heavy boots! Lieutenant Abercrombie came running on deck, but not to tell the soldier to desist; it was rather to urge the brutes on; and in the end he ordered the victims to be trussed up and lashed with the cat-o'-nine-tails!

"They're the O'Shaughnessy brothers!" whispered the pallid, horrified girl beside me. "Sent out as Irish rebels—poor boys!"

Neither brother was more than barely conscious when trussed up by the wrists to the stump of the mast. They were frightfully lashed across the bare back; at the end raw salt was thrown into the cuts; following which the victims were carried forward and dumped into a tank abaft the companionway.

"What's that for?" I asked Gwendolyn.

"It's filled with salt water," she grimly explained. "It is supposed to

revive them. Sometimes the poor fellows stay down of their own accord. They call it the 'Suicide Tank.'"

A BLOOD-RED film was gathering before my eyes. I had heard much of British prisons, with their "black holes," their abominable stews, their disciplinary "neck yokes," and their brutal guards. Here I was seeing a sample of it at first hand. Many of the wretches sent to Botany Bay were not guilty of anything worse than a misdemeanor.

When I thought of this girl eating moldy bread, sleeping in that rat-infested hold, lying without covers or pallet in the horrid cell rows in which a British squire would not have stabled a prize hog, my heart seethed with the desire to strangle every redcoat upon the ship.

Then, while my blood was boiling, who should touch me insolently upon the arm but Beau Tyron!

I wheeled about. As through a thick haze I saw that Captain Bradbury and Cap'n Fogg were coming out of the after cabin. But my eyes fastened immediately upon those of the man before me.

Fop, did I say? Ah, but he was. He was the dandy for silver buckles at his knees, was Beau Tyron! He wore a beautiful, pleated ruffled shirt, and a black and glossy wig, quite prettily waved, and tied in a queue at the back of his neck. But I saw now that his attire was responsible for my impression of slenderness; the man was as heavily muscled as myself.

His eyes only met mine for a brief second. It was as though he stared through me, seemed hardly aware of my existence.

"Stand aside, you!" he said—and looked past me at Gwendolyn, oblivious of all save her.

In the man's dark, handsome, brooding face was written the full story of his make-up. He was a seething volcano, a tortured prey to his desires. Even now he gnawed at his pink nails, at sight of her; his nostrils arched; he breathed like a drunken man.

The man was stark, raving mad with love of this girl who flouted him daily, who preferred a foul prison cell in the hold of a hell-ship to sharing his lot.

"Gwendolyn!" he cried.

She looked him up and down with scorn, and turned her back. Whereupon I took a hitch at my sailor's belt, and slapped down his outstretched hand.

"Sirrah," said I, "I like not the shape of your mouth!"

"What?" he muttered. He seemed to realize at last that I was facing him, and the thick blood darkened his neck.

"Out of my way, dog!" he cried, thickly, raising his fist.

Crack! My knuckles crashed full upon that sensual mouth; and *crack!* his head struck the deck.

"What's t h i s?" roared Captain Bradbury. Soldiers seized me; sailors picked up Tyron and carried him aft; Bradbury bellowed an order to send Gwendolyn back to the forward deck; and in the next breath the British skipper thundered: "Truss the damned Yankee rebel up! Ten lashes for striking one of his majesty's officers, by thunder!"

They hurried Gwendolyn away, though not before she gave me a tearful look of infinite gratitude and sympathy. A soldier shoved her brutally through the bulkhead door as they lashed me to the stump of the mizzenmast.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Snarling Saws

Against two lumber giants wrangling hotly for the choicest timber in all the Southwest, Hardy Lenwood takes up arms on behalf of a barefoot girl, a muttering squirrel-hunter, and Justice

By J. E. GRINSTEAD

Author of "The Crimson Trail," "In the Reign of King Ben," etc.

Novelette—Complete

Shots echoed in the lofty cathedral of the pines

CHAPTER I.

GUNS IN THE PINE WOODS.

THE sun was far over to the west, and already it was growing dusky in the aisles of Nature's great cathedral, the pine woods on Turtle Island. A young girl, perhaps eighteen years old, was hurrying along the winding trail that led through the forest. She was barefoot, and the trail was carpeted with pine needles, so she made no noise. At a sharp bend in the trail she stopped suddenly. Just around that bend, ahead of her, men were talking.

"You're a liar!" snarled one of them. "You're heading for old John Beeman's cabin, and I don't aim for you to go there."

"What you aim for me to do is not important," replied a strong, even voice. "The point is, how are you going to stop me?"

"Oh, you ain't ary king or anything. You can't lord it over me, just because you can break a hickory handspike over yo' knee. They's ways of stopping things. If you're going there to see old Beeman's girl, you'll get shot. If you ain't—"

"I didn't know Beeman had a

daughter," replied the smooth, even voice.

"Well, I did. If she had some shoes on her feet, a human dress, and a blue ribbon in that yaller hair, she'd be purty as a red pullet. Women is scarce enough in this forsaken piney woods, and there's more than you that would like to make up to Nellie Beeman. Plenty of fellows that swing an ax and peavey weeks on end, without sight of a woman, except the few snuff-dipping hags that does the washing, would like to cuddle to a soft little thing like—"

"Oh, shut your foul mouth and go on about your business!" said the strong, even voice.

"This is my business. If you ain't going to see the girl, there's just one other thing that could take you there, and you ain't going."

"I'd like to see you stop me," laughed the other man.

"All right, watch clost and you'll see me."

Crash! Bang!

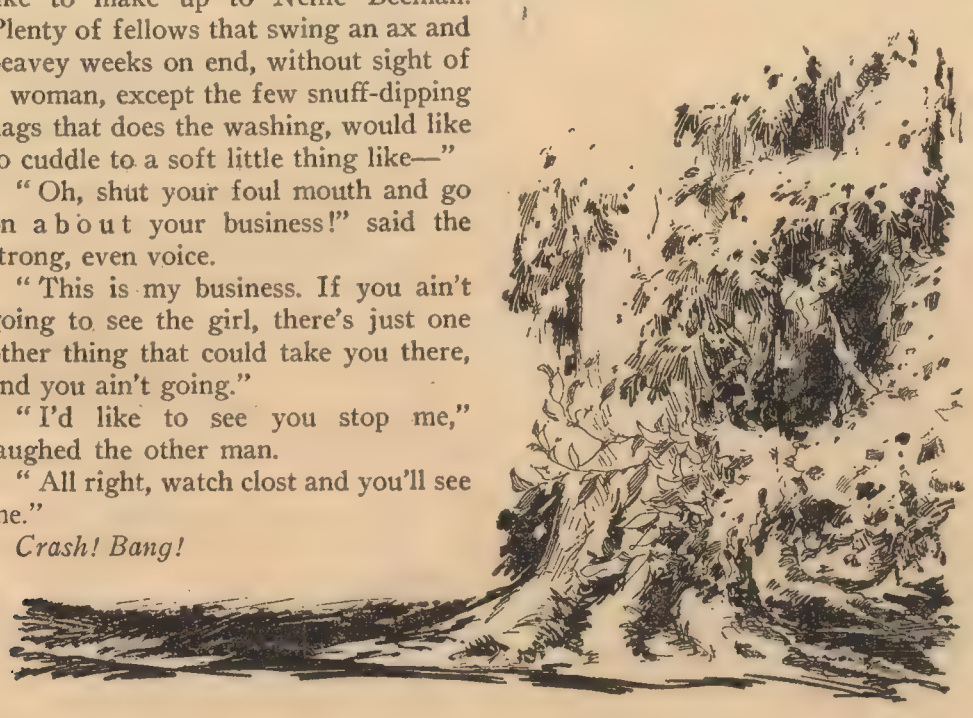
Two shots echoed through the aisles of that cathedral, which Nature had been a thousand years in building. Then dead silence but for the whispering of the giant pines. Nellie Beeman crouched behind a thick dogwood bush that grew beside the trail.

The silence was broken at last by the soft thud of heavy boots on the carpeted path. A man passed near where the girl stood, muttering to himself:

"You would have it! I guess that 'll stop you for a while."

The man swung away along the trail, going east.

Half a mile to the west, near the river, was old John Beeman's cabin. Nellie had roamed Turtle Island at will since early childhood. She knew that west of the river were great sawmills. She had heard their songs and snarls. She knew there were rough men there, but had seen few of them.



The man who had swung by in the dusk was a stranger to her. Nellie wondered if he had been trying to protect her from the other man. His voice did not have that sort of ring to it. Where was that other man? Fear seized her at the thought. She sprang into the trail to speed for the cabin. Then she turned the bend and stopped.

The stalwart form of a man lay across the trail. His hat was off, and his face was pale and gray in the gathering dusk.

At one glance she saw that he wore laced boots and was a little better clad than the usual mill hand. Beyond that,

she saw little; the man was dead, and fear lent wings to Nellie's feet. Darting through the pines, she gained the trail beyond the body and sped on toward Beeman's cabin.

OLD JOHN BEEMAN owned Turtle Island. It was not really an island. The broad, sluggish river ran on the west side of it. There had once been a big slough and swamp to the east of it, but Beeman had burned the raft at the mouth of the slough in a time of low water, and now little water stood in the slough except during floods.

If not geographically an island, however, that five thousand acres of untouched virgin pine forest was rapidly becoming a towering green isle in a gray sea of cut-over land. In the march of alleged progress men were rapidly destroying the beautiful things that Nature had labored so long to build. To the west of the river everything that would make a board was being fed into snarling, singing, rapacious mills. Far to the east of the slough, in the swamp lands, other mills were tearing at the hardwood forests.

John Beeman sat at his cabin door, thinking of these things in the gloaming. He had been happy and contented here on his island. It had been almost valueless until the mills came, but of late, since timber was getting scarce, he had been offered money for it. He had refused to sell.

It was his home. It took the whole island to make the home he wanted. In winter he could shoot duck on the river and deer and wild turkeys in the timber. In spring and summer, after the big rises, he caught wonderful fish in the great slough. He had few neighbors, and, until the mills came, no one was near him.

John thought that when the mills had cut everything else they would go away and leave him and the island. Unschooled in the ways of progress, he did not realize the rapacity and greed of the snarling sawmills. He had been happy here in the great silent forest with his little daughter since he got over the grief of losing his good wife; and he supposed he would always be, unless . . .

It was an unpleasant thought that had come to him again. Some day Nellie would find a man and go away with him. That would leave only his gun and his dog.

He sighed at the thought, then grew tense as he heard the rapid patter of coming feet on the trail, and a moment later Nellie sank trembling to the cabin step by his side.

"Why, Nellie," he drawled in a gentle tone, "what-all's the matter with you? Have you saw another one of them willy-wispys?"

"No, Pappy, I—I—"

"Steady, now. Get yo' breath. You been runnin'. I ain't never saw you this way before."

"N-no, and I ain't never been skeered this way before."

Nellie panted out her story. What the two men had said was recorded on her mind as on a phonograph record, and she repeated it word for word.

A deep wrinkle gathered between the old woodsman's eyes as the girl finished her story.

"Say the feller's layin' there dead?" he asked calmly.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, if he were aimin' to pester you, honey, I ain't sorry. Still, I can't let him lay there until the hogs eat him up. You light the lamp. I'll take Drum and go see about him."

"No, no, Pappy! Let me go with you. I'm afraid to stay here."

"Afraid! Why, you ain't never been afraid before."

"No, but I am now. I—I ain't never been skeered like this before, I tell you."

BEEMAN took his gun from the rack, whistled to the faithful dog, and took the trail, with Nellie following him. When they reached the spot there was no body to be found.

"Maybe this ain't the place," said Beeman.

"Yes, it is, Pappy. It was right here, where the trail bends around the twin pines and the dogwood thicket."

Drum was whining and sniffing the ground. Beeman struck a match and held it low.

"Huh! He's been there. Must 'a' bled dang nigh to death," muttered Beeman. "Here, Drum, trail him, boy. Track 'im slow," and the woodsman began circling the spot, with the dog whining at his heels. Presently the clear, bell-like note of the hound rang through the forest as he set off through the pines.

John Beeman and the girl followed the trailing hound in silence. Beeman's repeating rifle was in the crook of his arm, and the girl followed close behind him. The trail led down to the river bank. The hound stopped and whined. Beeman struck a match. There were tracks on the bank, and marks where a boat had been drawn out and made fast to a bush. On the leaves of the bush dark blood glistened in the light.

"Huh! Shot some," said Beeman, "but still able to go. Let's have another look at the size of them tracks."

The old woodsman struck another match. A shot crashed, and the bullet thudded into the earth within two feet of him. He threw his arm around the girl and sprang up the bank to the shelter of the woods. Then he stopped. Old John Beeman had no taste for being shot at on his own island.

"Sit down by that big tree, and let me have a look around," commanded Beeman.

Nellie relaxed gladly, for she could barely stand. Straining her eyes to catch any strange sound above the whispering of the pines and the murmur of the river, she heard her father's voice not twenty feet from her:

"Stop right there, pardner, and let's talk some."

The reply was the crash of a shot. Old John Beeman's rifle went to his shoulder, and its muzzle became a geyser of orange flame. There was a splash as a body fell into the river, and silence.

Then Nellie gasped out:

"Oh, Pappy! You've kilt a man!"

"Well, it looked like he was tryin' to kill me, on my own land," replied Beeman grimly. "Come on. Let's get to the cabin. Maybe they won't pester us there."

Long after Nellie had gone to bed old John Beeman sat in his cabin door, looking up through the pines at the distant stars and wondering, wondering. He had questioned his daughter closely, and she had declared that she knew no men. If the men had fought over the girl, old John could have understood it. Such fights were common in the piney woods. He believed Nellie had told him the truth, so he went on wondering.

A MILE from the river, on the west side, the big Newland mill stood in the bend of a considerable creek. The place was in silence. Only a thin wreath of smoke rose from the

smokestacks, fed by the banked fires. The little army of mill hands slept after their toil. One light showed through the chinks of the slab cabin that served as an office.

A dripping wet, bedraggled figure stole around stacks of lumber and mountains of sawdust, until he reached the cabin door, opened it, and went in.

Vance Newland, owner and operator of the big mill, was a human sawmill himself. Nearly six feet, not fat, but so broad of shoulder that he looked squat. His face was big, but bony, and his brows heavy, while his square chin shot out.

Reared in the mill game, he was familiar with every feature of the business, from the logging camps to the office. To Vance Newland, nothing must interfere with the mill. It went on if all the rest of the world was idle.

He now sat at a table, with books and papers scattered before him. His great gnarled hands rested on the table as he peered up through his shaggy brows at the visitor. Then he grinned, showing two rows of short, broad teeth.

"You look like hell, Curt," he chuckled.

"Yes, and I feel like it!" snarled Curt Anderson, a thin, wiry man of around thirty.

"Did you find Hardy Lenwood?"

"Yes. He was going to old John Beeman's cabin, and I stopped him."

"How did . . . Never mind. I don't care how, just so—"

"Oh, I'll tell you. I stopped him with a couple of bullets."

"Bullets! That won't do. Gun stuff and knife slinging ain't the mill way. Fists and handspikes don't make so much noise."

"No, I reckon not, but if you think I'd jump that Hardy Lenwood for a fist fight, you don't know me—or him. He's strong as Samson and got a punch like a steam nigger. You said the mill had to have logs, and about all that's left, outside of Lenwood's holdings, is on Turtle Island. The nearest way to logs, when you got to have 'em, is the best way. We've looked up the records on that island. The title is clear to old John Beeman. Put him out of the way, and you can bluff the girl."

"Yes, but . . . We got to be careful, Curt. I don't want to take too many chances."

"Don't have to take any. Everybody knows John Beeman don't like mill men. If somebody comes along the trail about daylight, he'll find Hardy Lenwood's body about half a mile from Beeman's cabin. Let the sheriff arrest Beeman as the likeliest one to have done the killing, and while he's in jail or the pen grab the logs. Buy 'em from the girl if you can. If not, just cut 'em and saw 'em. It's been done before."

"H'm! I hadn't thought of that. Why are you all wet?"

"After I—stopped Hardy, I circled around and finally went back to my boat. When I got there old John Beeman was taking a look for my boat, and I shot at him. Then he opened on me, and I jumped into the river and swam for it."

"Fine, fine! You had some lines set in the river for catfish, and was running 'em, when Beeman opens on you. Let him tell the jury what he was doing, prowling the river bank with his gun at that time of night. Fine case. I'll have my sawmill deputy travel that trail by daylight, and he'll do the rest. Get some dry clothes, go to bed, and keep your mouth shut until you're called on."

Curt Anderson slunk out of the office and went about his business. With a satisfied grin, Vance Newland went on figuring. He would get the Turtle Island timber, and he'd get it cheap.

VANCE NEWLAND was not the only mill man in his office at that hour. Chinkapin Creek, on which the Newland mill stood, was the line between Newland's holdings and the lands of Bart Lenwood. The Lenwood mill was a mile and a half down the river, opposite the lower end of Turtle Island.

Bart Lenwood still had plenty of timber on his own land, but there would come a day when he would want those Turtle Island logs, and he was already trying shrewdly to buy the land.

He, too, was a big man, with a great predatory hawk nose, but he was of a different type from Newland. No rough stuff for him. He managed for what he wanted, and he knew that any show of bulldozing tactics would set Beeman against him forever.

Lenwood was not thinking of timber just then; he was thinking of his nephew, Hardy Lenwood. Bart's brother had sent his son to him, wanting "the boy" to see a little of something besides college life before he settled down. Hardy wasn't a boy. He was twenty-four and very much of a man.

Hardy usually returned to the mill by nightfall. It was now late, and he had not come in. Old Bart Lenwood was uneasy; he loved his nephew in his rough way. Besides that, if any mischance befell Hardy, Bart's brother would never forgive him. These thoughts were in old Bart Lenwood's mind, when the door opened and Hardy stepped into the little office. His hair was matted with blood, his face was smeared with it, and his clothes were streaked.

"Good Lord in the morning!" roared old Bart, springing from his chair. "What on earth's happened to you?"

"I've been shot," replied Hardy grimly, through his mask of dried blood.

"Shot! Who the hell shot you? Where was you, anyway?"

"On Turtle Island."

"Turtle Island! Didn't you have any more sense than to cruise that timber? Everybody knows you're a timber cruiser for me. Everybody knows that old John Beeman don't allow timber cruisers on that island, so he shot you."

"I wasn't cruising his timber," replied Hardy, "and he didn't shoot me."

"Who did shoot you, then?"

"Curt Anderson."

"Curt Anderson? Why, damn him, what— But are you hurt bad?"

"I don't think so. He hit me in the head and knocked me out. I don't think I was out but a minute or two. When I came out of it, I hit the trail for my boat. There was another boat right by mine. I shoved the other boat out into the current, got into mine, and came home."

"Huh! You're a cool one, for a youngster. Come on. Let me wash your head and take a look at the wound."

Half an hour later, when old Bart Lenwood had cut away some hair and dressed the wound, which was only a scalp gouge high at one side of the forehead, he sat looking at his nephew, who seemed little the worse for his experience.

"Now, tell me straight," growled

old Bart. "What was you doing on Turtle Island? You didn't go there to see Beeman's girl, I know that. You ain't bad about women, and if you were, you wouldn't fool with a barefooted piney woods girl. Out with it."

"Well, Uncle Bart," said Hardy, "I may as well come clean with you. I know old John Beeman when I see him, and he looks like a good old scout. He's about the only one of the old pioneer stock left in these bottoms. The rest have been bought out, bluffed out, or killed out. I knew that with you and Newland both after his land, he didn't have a chance.

"I went there to warn him against both of you. Curt Anderson followed me, thinking I was trying to get the timber for you, and shot me. I guess you're through with me now. I'm not sorry. You fellows didn't mean for Beeman to have a square deal. I tried to get him one, and failed. I'm ready to hit the trail now."

A thunder cloud had gathered on old Bart Lenwood's brow, but he heard Hardy out; and when the young man had finished he still did not speak for a long time, nor did he look at Hardy; for the old rascal knew there was a crafty light in his eyes that he did not want Hardy to see. At last he said:

"No, I ain't through with you. I never had a better timber cruiser. I guess as big an outfit as this can afford one square shooter. Sawmills have to have logs, because the country has to have lumber. We can't pay big prices for logs at the price we sell lumber. I don't need logs yet. Maybe, by the time I do, Beeman will sell reasonable —if Vance Newland don't have him killed and steal his land. Go on to bed and keep quiet, until we see whether anything was knocked loose inside that coconut of yours."

Hardy went to bed with the words "if Vance Newland don't have him killed and steal his land" still ringing in his ears. When Hardy was gone, old Bart Lenwood sat for half an hour with an impish grin on his face. Would he get the Turtle Island logs? He would, and this square-shooting nephew would do the work and not know it. Was he through with his nephew? Hardly.

CHAPTER II.

THE LUST FOR LOGS.

VANCE NEWLAND was a man of iron. When he had time he slept. When he was too busy he didn't. He was busy now. This matter of stealing five thousand acres of timber land was important. If the millman had taken time to analyze his own character, he would not have branded himself as dishonest. He was a millman. To him, sawmills were the most important things on earth, and his own mill the most important of all.

When mills needed logs, they had to have them; had to get them any way they could. A man or two was of no consequence. Newland's mill had maimed men by the scores. Men had been made legless and armless. Others had been sawn asunder. Accidents all, because the men were in the wrong place, and failed to move in time.

Now old John Beeman was in the wrong place, and refused to move. The mill would get him. Newland did not consider that he was personally responsible; it was the mill. That whining, snarling saw was an elemental thing. A thing without a soul, perhaps, but none the less an entity. He was not its master. It was his master, and drove him relentlessly.

Long before daylight, Vance had roused his sawmill deputy, Tate Hailey. This Hailey was a mill product. Newland had brought him up through all the stages from logger in the woods to foreman of the yards. Then, when he had graduated and could eat and digest yellow pine sawdust, he had reached the degree of toughness for a sawmill deputy sheriff, and Newland had him appointed to keep the peace among the rough-neck crew.

Tate was fit for the job. A giant in strength, bull-necked, long-armed, and a rough and tumble fighter who had been whipped but once. A big, hard head that shot forward from his shoulders like the head of a gorilla, and small greenish-gray eyes, thatched with sandy brows, made him look like the terror he really was. Tate was a millman first, and an officer of the law afterward. He owed his very life to Newland, and Newland saw to it that he repaid the debt whenever he was needed.

As the east began to gray above the river fog, Vance Newland, Tate Hailey and Curt Anderson stood in a group near the river.

"Now, here's the lay, Tate," Newland was saying. "The mill needs logs, and when she needs 'em, she has to have 'em. There's five thousand acres of the best saw timber in these bottoms. The mill needs it; the mill gets it. Everything is playing right into our hands. Old John Beeman killed Hardy Lenwood last night, and—"

"The hell you say!" gasped Tate.

"Yes. The body lies in the trail, half a mile east of old John's cabin. You are going to cross the river, find the body before Beeman has time to hide it, and then take Beeman."

"I ain't got no warrant," protested the deputy.

"You don't need one. You wouldn't wait for a warrant if you saw a man killed, and you don't have to wait for one when you find a dead man at another fellow's doorstep. Do what you are told to do, and I'll take care of the rest. If Beeman gets a lawyer, I'll buy his lawyer. I don't want to hurt Beeman. I don't care if he did kill Hardy Lenwood. All I want is to scare old John Beeman until he takes his claws off that timber long enough for us to grab it. The mill needs logs."

"I see," grinned Tate, who had witnessed such things before. "You just want old John in jail, on a charge that ain't bailable, and needing money so bad for lawyers that he'll sell reasonable. Then when you get the logs, he can come clear and go on fishing and shooting squirrels on the cut-over land."

"That's about it. Now go on and find that body before the dogs drag it off."

The deputy walked down to the river bank, and disappeared into the low-lying fog. Newland and Curt Anderson stood listening until they heard the creaking of oars, then went back to the mill by separate ways.

JOHN BEEMAN had been the mildest-mannered old woodsman in the great bottoms until the night before when he had exchanged shots with some one in the darkness. That incident had carried him back two generations to the days when his ancestors had run the Indians off Turtle Island. The millmen had taken the place of the Indians. He knew they wanted his logs, and he now believed they had tried to kill him the night be-

fore, to get him out of the way so they could rob Nellie.

These thoughts were running in Beeman's mind as he stood washing his face at one side of the cabin, just after daylight. He glanced down to the river trail just in time to see Tate Hailey climb the bank and disappear into the woods, on the trail that led across Turtle Island.

Red streaks of rage came in old John's eyes. He knew Tate too well. As an officer, he was a joke. As a thug and handy man for Vance Newland, he was a terror... Hanging the coarse towel on a peg, old John stepped into the cabin. Nellie was in the shed-room kitchen cooking breakfast. Beeman called to her:

"I seen somethin' come up from the river and go into the woods. I'm goin' to see what it was. Be back direc'ly."

Nellie went on frying the eggs and bacon. It was daylight now, and she wasn't scared. Not still child enough to believe in bogies, nor yet woman enough to recognize incipient peril, she stood complacently frying bacon and eggs while the very air around her was charged with danger.

The American pioneer and frontiersman is probably the stanchest supporter of the law against trespass that the world has ever known. As long as he gets a square deal, his neighbor and the stranger within his gates can pasture stock on his land, sit in the warmest corner of his chimney in the winter and the coolest shade of his tree in summer. But once let him feel that he isn't getting a square deal, and up go the "no trespassing" signs.

They are not painted on boards, either. They are the curt invitation, "Get off and stay off" backed up with fists, wagon-spokes, handspikes, guns, knives, or whatever is handy. It was this feeling of outraged hospitality that caused the trouble at Boston a hundred and fifty-odd years ago. That same feeling was moving old John Beeman. Turtle Island belonged to him, and he was about to put up a "no trespassing" sign.

BEEMAN stole down to the river bank. An old dugout canoe had been drawn out and made fast to a bush. He untied the line, pushed the boat into the water, raised the end until it dipped enough water to swamp it, and let it go. The boat staggered out into the current and floated groggily downstream. Beeman picked up his rifle and disappeared into the woods, taking a course that paralleled the trail leading east across the island.

Moving swiftly, the old woodsman was abreast of Tate Hailey and peering at him through the pines when the deputy reached the spot where Hardy Lenwood had fallen the evening before. Beeman watched the deputy through a thicket of dogwood. He saw Tate examine the ground, then begin circling like a hound.

Beeman didn't know who the man was that had been shot, but he was now convinced that Tate Hailey had done the shooting, and had returned to hunt for his victim's body. From that, his wrought-up mind jumped to the conclusion that it was also Tate who had shot at him in the dark, on his own island. Fired with wrath, old John stepped from behind his bush.

"Here you, Tate Hailey! What you doin' prowlin' my woods?"

The deputy stopped dead in the trail, a few feet from where Hardy had fallen. It was half a minute before he could collect himself sufficiently to talk, and then:

"I ain't prowling. I'm deputy sheriff, and I got a right to go where I please in this county."

"Depity or no depity, you can't prowl my woods. This island belongs to me, and I want you to get to hell off'n it as quick as you know how."

Then the big gorilla grinned. The idea of this little old shrimp of a squirrel-hunter giving him orders was amusing.

"Been eatin' raw meat, ain't you, John?" he asked jocularly. "Now, you listen to me. There's been a man killed right here. There's blood on the pine needles. He was killed last night, and either the hogs has et him up, or you dragged him off and hid him."

Old John Beeman's face was livid. He swallowed hard, and his Adam's apple raced up and down his skinny neck.

"Hu-how did you know a man had been shotten here?" he demanded.

"Never mind how I know it. I know he was killed, and you killed him, and I'm going to arrest you for murder."

Tate Hailey probably noticed the rifle in the crook of John's arm, but by no stretch of the imagination could he see old John Beeman, commonly known as Uncle Johnny, resisting arrest. Such brains as old John possessed had been developed in the matter of woodcraft, and the mastery of nature. But old John knew he had committed no crime, and he didn't mean to be arrested.

"Come on!" snapped Tate. "Hit the trail for the river. You can go by the cabin if you want to."

Beeman, now pale as if with fright, stood moveless.

"Gimme that gun, you old fool!" snarled Tate. "Can't you understand nothing? You're arrested for murder."

Tate took a step toward Beeman. The gun flew up and crashed.

"PAPPY got it," said Nellie aloud, as she heard the faint echoing of the shot through the pines. It was not unusual for old John to follow some animal that came to the river at daylight to drink its fill before holing up for the day, and usually he got it.

With that thought in mind, hearing a step on the trail, Nellie went to the door to see what it was Pappy had got. A tall, sandy-haired young man with boyish brown eyes stopped a little way from the door, and removed his hat. A spot was shaved at one side of his head, and a broad strip of plaster covered the spot. He spoke as he removed his hat, but Nellie made no reply.

Her bare feet seemed glued to the cabin floor, and her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. Here was the dead man, come back to life to haunt her. She knew those laced boots, and she knew that face that she had seen so pale and gray. She could never forget it. A jumble of thoughts were in her mind, when Hardy spoke again:

"Is Mr. Beeman at home?"

There was nothing ghostly about his voice, and there was plenty of warm color in his face, so she replied:

"No, sir, he ain't. He followed a varmint into the woods. I heared him shoot, so he must of got it. He'll be back direc'ly. Won't you come in and sit?"

Hardy would, and he did. Nellie saw him glance at her shapely brown feet, and for the first time in her life felt ashamed of them. She had shoes. She wore them in the winter time, and sometimes in summer when the grass burrs were bad or when she and Pappy

crossed the big slough and went to town for their meager needs. But with this young man looking, her bare feet made her feel naked, and yet she couldn't move.

The acrid smell of burning grease, warning that the bacon was scorching, saved her. She sped to the kitchen and stayed, while Hardy Lenwood calmly waited the return of old John Beeman.

At last, Beeman stepped into the cabin. He stopped with a jerk just inside the cabin door, and snapped:

"Who are you?" This was contrary to old John's usually hospitable manner.

"I'm Hardy Lenwood," replied the young man, rising and extending his hand.

Either Beeman didn't see the hand, or else he chose not to shake hands with any one just then.

"Huh! I recollect you now. Bart Lenwood's nevvy. Seen you at the big barbecue. You're the chap that broke the hickory handspike over yo' knee and straightened the cant-hook with yo' hands. Trick in that, ain't there?"

"Yes, there's a trick in it." smiled Hardy.

"Huh! I don't like tricks. What do you want?"

"I want to talk to you, if you'll listen to me."

Old John put up his gun and sat down.

"I'm listening," he said, succinctly.

Hardy told him frankly what he had meant to tell him the night before: that the two big mills across the river were going to try to get Turtle Island. He didn't say, brutally, that they were going to get it, that the monsters would never cease snarling until they had rended apart those age-old forest giants, though he knew that was true.

"Mighty funny that Bart Lenwood's nevvy comes here and tells me his uncle is a thief," commented old John. "Trick in that, too, ain't there?"

"No, there's no trick in it." Then Hardy told the old woodsman what had happened the night before, and showed him the wound. He went on to tell of having talked it over with his uncle.

"Huh! What did he say?"

"He said he had plenty of logs for the present, and maybe you would be ready to sell by the time he needed Turtle Island — if Vance Newland didn't have you killed."

Old John's blue eyes were boring into Hardy as if they would see to his soul.

"And you come over here to tell me that?"

"Yes, and to tell you something else. Vance Newland is about out of sawstocks. A millman is just like a saw. He hasn't got any soul. He's the slave of his saw, and when it gets hungry he steals for it, and even kills for it."

"Yes, I reckon he do," drawled old John. "They tried to kill me last night. Then, this mornin', Tate Hailey comes over here to arrest me for killin' you. I reckon it was Tate that shot you."

"No. It was Curt Anderson."

"Oh, hit were? Well, Curt is just a fice out'n the pack of big dogs. Now, I got to tell you something, Hardy. Since you come so clean with me, I got to believe you're square. If you can keep Bart Lenwood off'n me, mebbe I can lick Vance Newland, but if they both jump me, I'll get scrunched."

"They're not going to jump you together. They both want the logs, and the best thing for you is to let them fight one another."

"I see, and where would you be in a fight like that, after packing tales to me?"

"I'd be with Uncle Bart as long as he fought Newland, and I'd be for you in a fight against either of them, just because I like to see a square deal, and you haven't got a chance of getting one in this mess."

"It's a funny idea," said Beeman, musingly. "You sound honest when you talk, but—"

"Pappy, breakfast's ready!" called Nellie from the kitchen door.

HARDY ate with them, at old John's invitation. The breakfast consisted of bacon and eggs, swimming in grease, heavy biscuits, and black coffee. As he ate in silence, Hardy was thinking. Every Lenwood he had ever known except his father was a millman, and to his mind they were all pirates. It might be a boyish idea, but he thought piracy was wrong, and he meant to prevent at least one crime in the family.

If Hardy had known that old Bart Lenwood, sly fox that he was, was playing him to win in the game for Turtle Island, he would have washed his hands of the whole mess and gone out of the country; but he didn't know that—didn't even suspect it.

Old John ate in thoughtful silence; then when he and Hardy were outside the cabin, where Nellie couldn't hear them, he said:

"Hardy, this tale you tell me sounds fishy, but it could be true. You say you're willin' to help me hold my land. Just now I need another sort of help. If you help me with that, and don't talk, I'll know you're on the square."

"What's the job?" asked Hardy, supposing it was some mission the old man wanted him to undertake.

"Why, Tate Hailey weighs around two hundred, and I can't handle him by myself."

"Are you going to fight Tate?" asked Hardy.

"No. It's this way. I own this island. I don't aim to have it trespassed on. Tate comes here to arrest me, like I said, and I killed him. I want you to help me bury him."

"What! You killed the deputy sheriff?"

"Yes, I killed him. He tried to arrest me without a warrant, for killin' you, when you ain't dead."

"I know, but—"

"Just a minute! I'm goin' to war for my land. I don't aim to tie up with nobody that won't stand hitched. That talk about me being an honest old squirrel-hunter, the last of the Mohicans, and how bad you want to see me get a square deal sounds good, but you can't fight with words.

"Tate Hailey was a cold killer. I know half a dozen murders he's done in the name of the law. He aimed to kill me, and I beat him to it. If you won't help me bury Tate, and be my friend and keep your mouth shut, just get off'n my island and stay off. I don't want no talkin' friends that ain't actin' friends."

It dawned on Hardy that this old backwoods squirrel-hunter was not so dumb as one might think. He had put the situation quite clearly. It showed Hardy where he stood in the matter. He either had to go all the way with old John, or throw up his hands and admit that he was a quitter when the way got rough.

Besides that, war was on between this lone old hunter and Vance Newland's outfit. If he stuck to Beeman, Newland would find it out and make war on him. All right, let him. Uncle Bart would take sides with him against Newland.

Hardy grinned inside at the thought

of Bart Lenwood, who was so shrewd and who boasted that he managed to get what he wanted without rough stuff, leading a knock-down-and-drag-out fight against a rival mill.

"All right," he said, "I'm with you. Let's go and get it done."

Old John silently handed Hardy an ax, then with a shovel over his shoulder and his rifle in the crook of his arm, led the way into the woods.

Nellie had just finished putting on her shoes and stockings. They made her feet uncomfortably hot, but Hardy might come back. She peeped out of the window and mused:

"Wonder where Pappy and him's going. Must aim to cut a bee tree. Hardy's got a ax. He don't look big until you get close to him, but he shore is big. I seen him break them hickory handspikes on his knee and bend a cant-hook with his hands. He's shore strong. I'll bet Tate Hailey couldn't whup him."

With a weary sigh, Nellie turned away from the little window and clumped off to the kitchen to clear the breakfast table. The man in a woman's life comes in strange ways. Nellie didn't suspect any such thing had happened to her. She was just a piney woods girl, and this young giant was clearly of another sort of clay.

CHAPTER III.

HARDY SEES RED.

OLD John Beeman led the way swiftly through the woods, avoiding the trail. When they had gone half a mile, he stopped.

"This is as good a place as any," he said, and leaning his rifle against a tree, he looked up at the sun "to get north and south," and started to dig.

That was a strange burial, there in the cloisters of the grand cathedral of the pines. Down, down they dug, taking turn about as they threw out the sandy soil and then the red clay. When the grave was done old John took the ax, cut pine boughs and made a bed in the bottom of it. When the great body of Tate Hailey, bully and killer, lay on its last green couch with the giant limbs composed, the old woodsman covered it with pungent pine boughs, while Hardy stood by in silence.

"I reckon them pine needles won't make him sneeze," remarked old John. "He boasted he could digest rich pine sawdust. We ain't got ary preacher, but it looks like somethin' had oughta be said."

The old woodsman stood for a moment with a shovel of earth poised in his hand, and then he said, without regard for exactness of the quotation:

"Them that lives by the sword shall die by guns and cannons," and let fall his shovelful of earth.

Never before had Hardy Lenwood witnessed so hard and calloused a scene. He had never taken a human life, had never been in a killing rage, and he couldn't understand it. He didn't realize that this was only a hardening process that was to prepare him for the things that were to come, in the war over the Turtle Island logs.

At the cabin the day wore on. It was past noon. The river bottom was hot and humid. Nellie's feet were scalding, but she stuck it out. She combed her golden hair and tied it with a blue ribbon. Then she put on her new print dress, with the pale pink ground and blue columbine flowers in it. She didn't really know why she was doing all this, as she sat in the cabin door, listening.

From across the river came the songs and snarls of the saw. She had listened to it many a time, but to-day the wind was right and she could hear it plainly. At times, the great saw snarled in a monster knot. Again, it would run idle as the carriage ran back and sang like distant music. It seemed to be trying to tell her something, but she couldn't understand the message. She was still listening when old John and Hardy came out of the woods.

Nellie noticed how Hardy towered above her father, whom she had always thought the greatest man in the world. She noticed the red clay on their boots, but she would ask no questions. Piney woods women didn't ask questions about things that didn't concern them.

Nellie wasn't ashamed now. She had on her shoes. Hardy could look at her feet if he wanted to.

WHEN the men came in to dinner, after washing up in the shade of the cabin, Hardy did look at her feet, but he looked at them last. He first saw her golden hair, combed back from the broad, white brow, and tied with blue. Then the almost violet eyes. The lovely face, just touched with color, the rounded form, her feet in the Sunday shoes, and then the floor.

It was the first time he had really looked at her, and he was wondering if she had grown from a diffident little girl into a woman in a few hours.

But that was all. Hardy Lenwood's mind was on other things than lovely women, no matter how quickly they matured. He had let himself into a bad situation with this calloused old woodsman, who could kill a man and bury him without a qualm of conscience. Tate Hailey had been bad, and he doubtless deserved to be killed, but killing was killing and it wasn't done in the best social circles. Hardy little dreamed that before another sunrise he, too, would feel a killing rage.

The meal finished, the men sat in the shade on the east side of the cabin and smoked. Old John sat near the corner, where he could peer around and see the river and the trail that led up the bank. His rifle was leaning against the wall. Hardy was forming a remark to make about going, without offending old John. He was wishing he had kept out of this mess, when Beeman said:

"You better just sit. I got an idea Vance Newland has got more than one killer out to-day. Where's yo' boat?"

"Hid in the willows down the river."

"Huh! Got an idea you couldn't walk a hundred yards down that river bank 'thout bein' shot at from the other side. Come night, you can get yo' boat and go home—if you want to."

It was more in the tone of an order than a mere suggestion, and Hardy kept his seat. The shadow of the cabin lengthened. Drum had scratched a cool place in the shade, and lay lazily snapping at flies. Old John Beeman peered around the corner, then turned to Hardy and said:

"You can go inside if you'd ruther."

That was as near as John Beeman had ever come, or would ever come, to inviting a young man to seek Nellie's company. Hardy cheerfully accepted that as an order, also. Not so much to be with the girl, as to escape the cold-blooded old man.

OVER at the Newland mill, the day had passed as usual with all save Vance Newland and Curt Anderson. Tate Hailey had not been about the mill all day, but that was not

unusual. He might be away on some business for Newland, or he might be sleeping off a drunk. Late in the afternoon, Newland sent for Curt Anderson. When Curt entered the slab office, Newland snarled:

"What do you suppose became of Tate? He'd oughta been back long before noon, and he ain't back yet."

"Got his man, crossed the big slough, and went up the river on the other side, I reckon," replied Curt.

"He didn't do any such a thing, and you know it! I told him to bring old John over here. As soon as I saw he had the old devil, I aimed to put a gang to cutting logs on the upper end of Turtle Island and floating 'em across to the mouth of Cherry Creek. We are out of saw stocks, and the mill's got to run."

"Yes, I reckon it has," yessed Curt.

"You know well it has. I want you to take a gang of fellows and go across to old John's cabin. I want you to find out what's become of Tate."

"Vance, that old squirrel-hunter will sling lead," demurred Curt.

"Let him sling it! If he opens on you, you will be on the inside of the law."

"If he opens on me in a good light, I'll be on the inside of a varnished box, and—"

"Shut up your croaking, and get out of here!" stormed Newland. "Do you think I'm going to shut down the mill for want of logs, when there's a million on Turtle Island begging to be cut? I don't aim to let an old fool like John Beeman stand between my mill and its logs."

"But, Vance—"

"Shut up! Take Curly and Beatty and three more that's gun-slingers, and go do what I tell you."

"But—but you said you didn't like gun stuff for millmen. Said it made too much noise. That fists and handspikes—"

"If you don't quit blatting and go do what I tell you, I'll break a handspike over your head!" roared Newland, coming from behind his table with his knotty fists doubled and ready.

Curt Anderson fled to obey an order for which he had no taste.

FOR an hour Hardy Lenwood had been talking to Nellie, and he had discovered that, piney woods girl as she was, she knew many things of which he had never heard. She was in the midst of a list of wild flowers and fruits and their seasons, when Hardy heard a quick step and saw old John Beeman walk swiftly by the open door and on toward the river. A moment later he heard Beeman call:

"Hold on there! What do you fellows want?"

"Where's Tate Hailey?" came Curt Anderson's voice, which Hardy recognized.

"I ain't keepin' Tate," replied Beeman. "Hey! Don't ground that boat. This island is my property, and I'm a livin' sign ag'in' trespassers. Keep yo' hoofs off'n it, I tell you."

"They're quarrelin' with Pappy," said Nellie in a hushed tone, "and he's bad to quarrel with—"

Hardy sprang out the door, unarmed as he was, just as Beeman's rifle cracked. Guns roared from the big, flat-bottomed rowboat that lay under the bank, and old John Beeman, brave though he was and defending his own, according to his lights, fell with two bullets in him.

"Push off, you damn' fools!" yelled Curt Anderson. "You got him."

Busy with their oars, they did not

see the giant Hardy as he sprang to old John's side and caught up the fallen gun. If it had been a fair fight, Hardy might have acted otherwise; but six to one were too many. Old John Beeman was his friend, and he was dead. A cartridge shot into the chamber, the gun crashed, and a wild yell rose from the boat, which was getting under way.

"It's Hardy Lenwood! Plug him!"

But the plugging was going the other way. Old John had seventeen cartridges in that magazine rifle, and he had used but one. The other bullets were busy now, making one-way trips to that boat. The fire was returned, but the aim from the rocking boat was not good.

Bullets whistled all around Hardy, but none struck him, while he was doing damage at every shot. Two men were hit, went overboard, and were struggling toward the other bank. A bullet tore a hole in the side of the boat below the water line, and it began to fill.

Hardy had a killing rage in him now and was seeing red. Curt Anderson had shot him the night before, but there was no time now to single out Curt. Hardy was standing right out in the open, playing the whole board for general results. The boat foundered, and the other four men went into the drink and swam for the other side of the river, while Hardy fired his last shot at a bobbing head in the shadows near the bank.

IT was a wet and bedraggled crew that filed into Newland's office half an hour later.

"Devil of a looking mess!" he commented. "Where's Tate?"

"Dunno, but we got old John Beeman."

"Oh, you did! Then forget Tate—let him take care of himself."

"Old John opened on us first and fired one shot, and we—"

"Never mind the legal aspects of the case!" snapped Newland. "Let the lawyers take care of that when the time comes. Get a logging crew on the upper end of that island. We'll have that timber half sawed up before the case gets in c o u r t. Where's Curly and Beatty?"

"Somewhere in the river, I reckon. They was both shot clean loose from the boat before it sinks."

"What! You said old John fired only one shot."

"He did; but Hardy Lenwood grabs up the gun and pours all he's got into that boat."

"Hardy Lenwood!" yelped Newland. "You told me he was dead!"

"I know I did, but he ain't. I don't know what he was doing at Beeman's cabin."

"I do!" snarled Newland. "He was trying to get them Turtle Island logs for that t i m b e r - h o g uncle of his. You've got to stop Hardy from getting back to the Lenwood mill. Old Bart Lenwood will have a double-bitted ax up to the eye in every log on the island inside of two hours after he hears old John's dead. Bart always was a timber thief."

"What do you want did?" asked Curt.

"Did? You putty-headed ape! Don't stand there like a lot of scotch-blocks in the mud. Get a boat, Curt, and what men you want to go with you. Get on the river, below the mouth of Chinkapin, and don't let Hardy Lenwood get to old Bart!"

Curt tore out of the office to escape the approaching storm. Newland was working himself into a frenzy. The

thought of Lenwood beating him to those wonderful logs, now that John Beeman was out of the way, drove him nearly mad.

A minute later he was cursing the boss of the logging crew. "Get every ax, saw, cant-hook, handspike, ox, mule, rope, and chain in the outfit on the upper end of Turtle Island in less than an hour!" he roared. "Take every man we got."

"That old fool thinks he's Paul Bunyan," grinned the grizzled old foreman, as Newland stormed away to drive his men together for the assault on the giants of the forest. "It ain't my funeral, but I'll bet him a forty-foot log again' a busted peavey that he pays a dollar for every chip he makes on Turtle Island. He's been blustering and storming over saw stocks and stumpage for the last five years, trying to bluff and cuss his way over everything and everybody. All the time, old Bart Lenwood has been smiling his mustache up on each side of that hook nose and taking every trick. He'll take this one, too. They call him the fox, and he is one."

Newland's camp became active as an ant hill. He drove his men like slaves. Half an hour later, log wagons and strings of oxen and mules were rumbling toward the head of the tramway at the mouth of Cherry Creek, and an army of men, with axes and saws, were marching in the wake of the rolling stock. Vance Newland was galloping back and forth along the line on his horse, cursing the whole crew for laggards.

Opposite the mouth of Cherry Creek was a thousand acres of the finest timber on Turtle Island. The land sloped gently down to the river, and one or two yoke of oxen could snake the biggest log to the water's edge. The river was broad and deep at that point, with little current. It would be easy to float the logs across, jerk them up the skids with cables onto the tramcars and away to the mill.

There was the fire of conquest in Vance Newland's eyes, and his broad, stubby teeth were clenched tight at thought of that harvest of food for his mill, as he spurred on in the night.

BACK at old John Beeman's cabin there was consternation. As he fired his last shot and saw the enemy escaping to the timber across the river, Hardy Lenwood stooped and picked up old John in his arms. He carried the limp body into the cabin and laid it on a bed.

Hardy thought old John was dead, but he was mistaken. The woodsman was bleeding a little from a wound in one arm. Another wound was in Beeman's back, just above the hip. He had been standing sidewise to the enemy. That bullet had lodged against a nerve somewhere, and rendered the old squirrel-hunter's legs too limber for service. He was paralyzed from the hips down.

As Hardy examined the wounds old John came out of his trance and said weakly:

"Looks like they got about half of me, son. Nellie, fetch me them papers out'n the leather trunk."

Hardy went on binding up the slight wound in the arm. The one in the back was just a blue hole, with very little dark venous blood coming from it. There was nothing he could do. Obviously, no artery had been severed.

The only thing to do was to get the old man to a doctor. The nearest one was at the hostile camp across the river; he didn't dare go there. The next was at Lenwood's mill. He could

not leave the girl and old John there and go for the doctor, and he didn't believe Beeman could stand being carried half a mile to his boat. Hardy was pondering these things when Nellie returned with the papers.

"You can stop a while now, Hardy," said old John haltingly. "Nellie, take pen in hand and set this down: 'I, John Henry Beeman, being sane and in my right mind, and knowing the certainty of sudden and awful death, hereby will and bequeath all my worldly goods, including Turtle Island, letters patent to which is hereto attached, to Hardy Lenwood, to have and to hold forever, amen."

Nellie had faltered in the writing. Old John opened his eyes and his lips twisted in a wry smile.

"Write it down, Nellie, and let me sign it. I may not last long. Don't you worry. If I left it to you, them hellions would take it away from you. Ary man that stands up and fights in the open, like Hardy did, won't rob an orphant. Let me sign it now, while I can."

Laboriously the old fellow scrawled "John Henry Beeman" at the bottom of the unusual document, then dropped his hand by his side.

"Pin it onto them papers now, Hardy, and put the whole outfit into yo' pocket. Now, Nellie, you'll find a quart of Old Crow in a corner in the trunk. Mix up about half of it with some water and a little sugar. I can't drink enough straight to do any good. If I can make the rest of me feel like my legs does, I won't suffer none."

HARDY knew he was looking at real courage as old John tilted that tin cup. Cold sweat was standing on the old man's brow, and his face was drawn and gray. He had drunk almost a pint of whisky, when he gave a quivering sigh and closed his eyes. Hardy was watching him and had forgotten Nellie, when she whispered at his elbow:

"Is—is he going?"

"No. It's the liquor. He's easy now."

"You—won't leave him thataway, will you?" Nellie's voice quivered.

"I won't leave him at all," replied Hardy. "We've got to get him to a doctor. It's half a mile to my boat, and I don't believe he can stand to be carried that far."

"We've got an old boat down by the spring," said Nellie. "It's old, but it's all right. I'll go and get the water out of it."

"No. Let me do that," insisted Hardy.

"I—I'd rather. I'm—afraid to stay here with Pappy, with him like he is."

Half an hour later Hardy laid old John on some quilts in the old boat. They spoke almost in whispers, as if in the presence of the dead. Taking their places in the boat, Hardy was about to push out into the stream, when he suddenly froze and whispered:

"Hush! Listen!"

There was the rattling of chains, knocking of horns of the oxen, rumble of wagons, and a whispering undertone of tramping feet. As they listened they heard a shrill oath, and some one yelled:

"Shake a leg, damn you! The mill's got to have logs."

Hardy knew the rapacious cry of the hungry mill for its natural food. Vance Newland was taking his crew to the head of the tramway at the mouth of Cherry Creek.

In spite of all the recent tragedy,

in spite of the grave burden in the boat, Hardy couldn't resist an inward chuckle. Uncle Bart would never let Newland cut those logs, right under his greedy eyes. He must get to the mill and tell old Bart what Newland was doing. They thought old John was dead, and perhaps he was. Let them fight. He had a surprise and a stiffer fight for the winner.

Hardy felt of the package of papers in his pocket to make sure it was safe. Then telling Nellie to keep low in the boat and make no noise, he let go and sculled noiselessly down the river, keeping close under the east bank.

Once Hardy caught a willow and held with one hand, while with the other he felt the threadlike pulse of old John Beeman. The game old woodsman was still alive. The boat drifted on in the silent night, with only the gurgle of an oar now and then.

They were opposite the mouth of Chinkapin Creek and heading into a straight stretch of swift water that would bear them quickly down to Lenwood's landing, when a voice spoke in a clump of low-hanging willows on the west side, in a cautious tone that was borne across the silent water:

"There he goes! After him, you fools!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE BATTLE UNDER THE WILLOWS.

HARDY had old John's rifle across his lap, and the magazine was full. He couldn't row and shoot at the same time. He fought the boat out of the current that was just gripping it and shot it into the willows on the east bank.

"Hold hard to these willows," he whispered to Nellie as he felt the current still pulling at the boat. "We'll stay here until they come. Maybe they will miss us."

"He went into them willows, fellers," called Curt Anderson. "Smoke him out."

Hardy had not really wanted to kill Curt before, but now his lust for blood was roused. A man who would fire on a woman and a cripple! True, Nellie had been low in the boat, and the men had thought Hardy was alone; but Hardy didn't know that. It would have been much better for Curt and his crew if they had known who was in the boat and had observed the ancient water craft courtesy of profound respect to women.

Barely had Nellie taken firm hold of the willows when a shot crashed, and the bullet, falling short, spattered water in Hardy's face, while the orange sparks showered on the water.

"Hold hard, now!" warned Hardy, as he turned loose the limb he was holding and took up the rifle. Again there was a crash of shots. This time the bullets went high, and willow leaves, cut by the slugs, showered into the boat.

In the flash of light from the guns in the other boat, Hardy fired calmly and deliberately. There was no lack of desire to kill on his part now.

"He's got Curt!" cried one of the men.

"Well, what of it?" snapped another. "Our job is to get him. Let him have it."

Their guns roared again, and in the flash Hardy could see the boat plainly, a little farther out from the bank than it had been at first. It was a large boat, and in it were five men. If he had got Curt, the crew had consisted of six men. The odds were too great. They had fired too low at first, and

then too high, but eventually they would get the range.

If he were alone, he could leave the boat and make his way down the river on foot, then swim to the other side; but that was not to be thought of. He wouldn't leave the girl and the old cripple, and he couldn't get them ashore.

Even in the midst of such difficulties, the thought flashed through Hardy's mind that Vance Newland and his bullies were by this time among the big pines at the head of the island. If Barton Lenwood knew that, he would be on the timber pirate like a tiger.

It was less than a mile to Lenwood's mill, but it might as well have been a thousand. Hardy would never abandon his companions. The thought was only a fleeting one, such as often come to men in the midst of danger. The thing uppermost in Hardy's mind now was to save himself, old John, and the girl. The silence was so long that one of the men in the other boat said:

"I guess we got him that time."

"He's took to the woods," said another. "We better drop down stream and keep him from crossing. Old man Vance said he mustn't get to Lenwood's mill."

The cat was out of the bag now. Vance Newland was afraid of old Bart Lenwood. Hardy writhed at the thought of being powerless to get the message to his uncle.

"Try another shot into them willows," ordered the leader of the thugs.

Their guns crashed again, and Hardy fired twice. There was a yell in the enemy boat.

"He got me in the arm," said one. "Back off, you fools. He's in the shadow, and we're drifting out into the light where he can see us."

Their oars fell, and their boat backed into the shadow of the willows. Nellie uttered a little gasp.

"What's the matter? Are you hit?" asked Hardy, anxiously.

"No, I—think I got a splinter in my hand. They hit the boat that time."

The low voices of the men in the other boat carried across the water to them. The leader was talking now:

"We can't do any good shooting at them willows. It's like shooting at a barn because there's a mouse in it. We've got to go in there and get him."

"If we start across there, he'll pot us as soon as we get out in the open," protested one of the men.

Their voices dropped lower. Hardy could catch only a word now and then. "Farther up...shadows...other side."

FROM these fragments, Hardy sensed that they were going to pull up the river, out of range, cross to his side, then drift down on him in the black shadow of the east bank. Shooting would do no good in that inky darkness. He was no gun-fighter. He had scored two hits in three shots, but the men had been in the open. He couldn't hope to hit in the dark. And there were no cartridges except those in the magazine. If he let those five men come to grips with him, the battle was over.

On the other hand, he couldn't hug the bank below where he was, for the water was shallow and the swift current was in midstream. If he took to the open water and ran for it, the pursuers would riddle him with bullets. He would have only a little lead, and they had two rowers and a steersman. They'd either sink him, or pick him up in that half mile of open water.

Hardy was trying to decide on a course when he heard a muttered oath

in the shadow not a hundred feet above him. The decision was made for him. He wondered how that boat had crossed so quickly, but he knew his only hope was in flight.

"Turn loose," he whispered. Then as he felt the boat move, he shoved hard.

The clumsy old scow wallowed out into the current. Hardy dipped the oars and shot the old hull into swift water. Guns flashed from both sides of the river, and Hardy saw he had been trapped. The enemy had two boats. The men had talked in the big boat, while a lighter boat had gone upstream, crossed, and dropped down almost on him. But for a low limb knocking the head of one of the two men and causing him to swear, the skiff would have grappled with Hardy before he knew it, for he was still listening to the men in the other boat.

When the guns crashed, bullets spattered around the rocking old boat, as Hardy bent to his oars in a last desperate effort Perhaps he could make it near enough to the mill for Bart Lenwood to hear the shots and investigate.

"There he goes!" yelled the leader in the big boat. "After him, fellows. We got him now."

The big boat drove into the open water, but the lighter craft shot into the current ahead of them. It was a canoe with only two men. They wouldn't have much time for anything but their boat in that swift water.

Two minutes later the three boats were in a line. Hardy had a hundred-foot lead. The canoe came next, bobbing along like a cork in a riffle and gaining on Hardy's boat every moment. The big boat was more than a hundred feet behind the canoe, but coming strong.

"Get that shell out of the way, so we can shoot!" yelled the leader in the big boat.

Hardy caught the meaning of that. The men in the canoe had no guns. They meant to board him, while the others wanted to use guns. Flight was useless. The canoe was gaining by leaps. Shipping his oars, Hardy caught up the rifle. Here was where it happened. At his first shot, at a range of not more than fifty feet, one of the men pitched from the canoe and floated away, while the other fought frantically to get out of the line of fire, as the leader in the big boat cursed him. Hardy fired again. The remaining man in the canoe fell over the side, caught at and capsized the craft and floated downstream with it.

Then the men in the big boat opened fire at about a hundred feet. Hardy's old scow was making only the speed of the current, while the pursuing boat was being driven by oars. The pursuit would be short. There was a storm of lead now. A slug ripped into the starboard side of the scow, and tore a hole at the water line. The river started to pour in. Hardy sprang to the port side and listed the crippled boat until the rail was almost awash, in order to hold the leak above water. Frantically, he jerked the lever of the rifle, until at last it clicked empty. The fight was over!

WAS it? The real fight had just started. The men in the big boat had ceased firing. They, too, were out of cartridges. There were still four of them.

"Go on to him, bullies!" yelled the leader of the thugs. "We've got him now."

There was a cracking noise as Hardy broke one of the heavy ash oars across

his knee, then grim silence. The attackers made the mistake of boarding on the port side. As they drifted alongside, one caught the little rail of Hardy's boat and met the surprise of his life. The last one, in fact. Hardy sprang to his feet and swung the ash club. It fell on the man's head with a crushing sound. The enemy boat shot by, and the man slid overboard.

Hardy was wild with rage now. The enemy boat swung around and sought to grapple on the leaky starboard side of Hardy's boat, and swamp it, but with his one oar Hardy swung his boat around and threw his port side against them. Two of the remaining three men clutched the rail.

That terrible club swung again. Hardy struck down, and along between the boats. The club broke arms as it went. One man went overboard in his agony, the second fell back helpless in the boat.

Seeing his peril, the leader sought to steer clear, but there was something that he didn't know—two things. One was that the giant Hardy Lenwood had reverted to the character of his forbears, who had been millmen and fighters since there had been mills in America. The other was that Hardy knew old John Beeman and his quilts were awash in the bottom of the boat, and the old scow was going down any moment.

Catching the low rail of the Newland boat with his left foot, Hardy crashed the two craft together, and stood with a foot in each. The burly pirate sprang for him, and met that ash club fairly between his eyes. He staggered back and pitched head foremost into the river. The fight was really over.

"Quick! Jump for the other boat!" ordered Hardy.

"Not until Pappy's in it," refused Nellie calmly.

"Then grab the rail and hold hard, while I move him."

Hardy caught up old John and his dripping mass of quilts, and stepped into the captured boat. As he laid the burden down, he heard a gurgling noise. Springing to the rail, he caught Nellie's arms even as the old scow sank beneath her.

When the girl was safe in the captured boat, Hardy sank to one of the seats and breathed in great gasps after his terrific exertion.

"Thank God, we are safe," he gasped, at last. "We have a boat. But we have no oars. It isn't a quarter of a mile to the landing, and maybe we can hail some one as we drift by, but... Listen! There's another boat, and we can't run from them. Is it upstream?"

"No. It sounds like—"

"Hey!" came a gruff voice from the darkness. "What the hell's going on here? Another Battle of Manila Bay?"

"That's Uncle Bart," whispered Hardy, assuringly. "We are all right now." Then raising his voice: "Over this way, Uncle Bart!"

"That you, Hardy?" called the old lumberman, as his boat raked alongside.

"Yes. We've got Mr. Beeman. He's been shot, and we're trying to get him to a doctor."

"Why ain't you rowing, then?"

"We have no oars."

Deep in his mill-hardened carcass, old Bart Lenwood had a heart.

"Gimme that line!" he roared. "Head for the landing, and break yo' backs, you bullies!"

The boats caught the current and shot away down the river, while old Bart said to himself: "I'm so glad I found that fool boy that I could forgive

the devil for singeing my whiskers. This ought to help me get them Turtle Island logs."

CHAPTER V.

TO THE ATTACK.

AT the landing, old John Beeman was carried up the bank and to the doctor's office. Half an hour later the mill doctor stood up from his task.

"There's the bullet," he said, "but I can't tell what it has done. Get him on that bed, and I'll watch him until he comes from under the ether." Then he called to his wife: "Here, Lottie, take this girl to your room and let her lie down before she falls down."

Old Dr. Ralls was as rough and hard as the millmen he treated, but he knew his business and had real kindliness under the surface, just as had old Bart Lenwood. He knew no woman could take anything as calmly as Nellie had taken this night's experiences and not suffer inwardly.

"I don't need you fellows," snapped Ralls, when the women were gone. "Get out of here, and give old Johnny a chance when he wakes—if he does."

Bart Lenwood led the way to his office, and when he and Hardy were inside, he said:

"Now, young man, tell me just what the scorching blazes you've been up to."

"Why, I went to old John Beeman's cabin this morning, like I told you I would, to warn him against you and Vance Newland."

"Huh! Go on. Did you warn him?"

"Yes. Then I found out that Curt Anderson had shot at old John last night. This morning, Tate Hailey went over to arrest old John for killing me, and old John killed Tate."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, sir. I helped him bury Tate."

"Well, that's one good thing old John has done. This mill country can get along without Tate Hailey fine. Go on!"

Hardy told him of the fight at the cabin, and the shooting of Beeman. He told him he lost his head, and shot the outfit up with Beeman's gun.

"H'm! That ought to help us to get them Turtle Islands logs. But go on. What in the smoldering furnace was all that shooting about?"

"Why, that was Curt Anderson and some more of Newland's thugs, trying to keep me from getting back here."

"Trying to keep you from getting back here? Why, what— Hardy, you're holding out something on me. You're telling it too slow. Let it gush."

Hardy was grinning inside now. Uncle Bart was always working somebody, and now he was going to get worked. Hardy was going to make Bart take Vance Newland's outfit apart, in the hope of getting those Turtle Island logs, and then he wouldn't get them.

"I don't know why, unless they wanted to keep me from telling you what I know."

"Well, you're here now, why don't you tell me what it was they didn't want me to know?"

"I'm not sure," hesitated Hardy, in an effort to get old Bart crazy, "but I think Vance Newland didn't want you to know he had moved his logging outfit to the head of Turtle Island, after he thought old John Beeman was dead."

"What! You mean—"

"I mean that Vance Newland's outfit is cutting logs by pine-knot torches right now, and floating them across from Turtle Island to the head of his

tramway at the mouth of Cherry Creek."

Old Bart was up like a rocket.

"Vance Newland always was a roughneck thief, and a disgrace to the milling industry," he roared. "He's a pirate and a murderer, but I'll be double damned if he gets away with this. He can't run over the rights of private property while I'm here."

"And wanting those logs," thought Hardy, grinning inwardly.

"Wake up!" thundered old Bart. "I'm going to stop that act of piracy."

"It's not your fight," suggested Hardy.

"It ain't my fight? It's any decent man's fight, when a big bully like Vance Newland jumps on a pore old squirrel-shooter like John Beeman, shoots him up, and tries to steal the land his daddy took away from the Indians. Come on! Rouse the men, and let's go."

THIS was like Bre'r Rabbit and the brier patch, to Hardy. He wanted to be thrown into it. There was little need for urging. The men of the big rival outfits fought at every picnic and barbecue. The hope of coming to blows with the Newland men was a sweet morsel under the tongues of Lenwood's huskies. In half an hour they were crossing the river and landing on Turtle Island by the boatload.

Hardy was on the island holding them down and keeping them quiet, while old Bart drove his men into boats like an old woman shooing her ducks into the creek. Finally he crossed, with the last boatload, and the expedition was under way.

"No noise," was the order as they climbed out to the open pine timber and started marching up the island. Hardy and old Bart led the way.

Bart Lenwood knew every landmark on the island. He had cruised it in secret, and had looked with avaricious eyes on every saw-stick in its wonderful forest. He knew to a thousand feet how much lumber was there, and his soul writhed at the thought of Vance Newland sticking his unhallowed axes into such timber. It was little short of sacrilege, and he said so to Hardy as they went along.

"I'm going to drive the blasted vandals off this island," he muttered. "Then, if I know anything about human nature and human gratitude, old John Beeman will sell me the logging rights at a price a poor man can pay, and keep his land."

"He might," said Hardy.

"Might! Of course he will. He is human, ain't he?"

"I don't know. He may be immortal by this time. He's already dead from the waist down, and—"

"Well, the girl's human, ain't she?"

Hardy didn't seem disposed to commit himself on that point, and they marched on in silence, with the steady thud of feet on the carpet of pine needles behind them.

VANCE NEWLAND might be a pirate, as charged, but he knew his logging. Within an hour after his men landed on the upper end of Turtle Island, saws were slashing and trees falling. Inside of two hours the little dinky engine puffed away toward the mill with its first string of beautiful logs.

Give him twenty-four hours and he would have enough logs to help. Give him a week and he'd have a fortune in pine logs on his runways. If the courts interfered, let 'em. They could not identify a log after it got into his yards.

So, all unaware of approaching trouble, with saws and axes ringing, chains jangling, and the horns of oxen knocking, while flares of rich pine-knots burned here and yonder, Vance Newland drove his men as only he knew how to drive them.

It was almost daylight when a wiry little checker came scampering up to where Newland stood near a torch with a steady stream of profanity flowing from his lips. He saw the checker and snarled:

"Well—what's the matter with you?"

"Why, why—there's a thousand men just up the slope, and they're coming this way!"

"A thousand hells!" roared Newland, grabbing the little man by the scruff of the neck and jerking him from his feet. "What's the matter with you? Listen!"

There was a lull in the whining of the cross-cut saws. Newland heard a sound he knew. It was the impact of a fist on a solid jaw.

"Handspikes!" he roared. "Handspikes, you men, and step lively."

The cry was taken up and wafted on down to the river:

"Handspikes! Handspikes! Handspikes!"

It was the rallying-cry of the loggers to a fight. Saws and axes were dropped, peaveys thrown down, teams abandoned, and an army of burly giants swept up the slope while a voice called, high and tense with carrying power:

"Where are you, Vance Newland, you pirate and timber-thief? Show yourself like a man before I break your lousy neck!"

Old Bart Lenwood had forgotten that he was a soft-spoken, smiling gentleman, who angled for what he got. He was only forty-five, and a giant. He went back twenty years, to the time when he had been a logging boss in the cypress swamps of Louisiana and could whip anything he could reach, panthers included.

Vance Newland recognized the voice of Bart Lenwood, his ancient enemy and rival. With a roar of rage, his ape-like head shot forward, and he plunged into the timber at the head of his men. Some one yelled:

"Gouge, will you? Take that home with you." *Wham!*

There would be no guns in that battle. Nothing but fists and handsticks, the weapons of a true logger.

CHAPTER VI.

GIANTS AT WAR.

THE outposts of Newland's little army of loggers had been driven in by sheer weight of numbers as old Bart Lenwood, roaring with rage, swept down on them. Among the tree-laps and fallen logs the two main bodies crashed together. It was not one battle, but a dozen.

Day was breaking, but the only light under the forest roof was that of the pitch-pine flares by which Newland's men had been working. Wherever there was a spot of light, there a battle was going on. In some, a dozen men were on each side. In others, ancient enemies who had fought before were settling their scores with fists.

There was no shooting. Any man who had fired a shot would have been torn limb from limb for violating the loggers' rule of fairness.

By the fortunes of war, Vance Newland was at one end of the battle-line and Bart Lenwood at the other; so they didn't meet at once.

A dozen Lenwood men tried to drag Newland down and beat him to death. Vance Newland had never been whipped. He had once won a bet by whipping the notorious Tate Hailey with one hand tied behind his back. Now both his huge fists were free, and he was using them to good purpose. A smashing blow to the midriff and a Lenwood man doubled up against a fallen log and lay still. They couldn't touch Newland; he was like an enraged beast.

At the other end of the line Newland men had ganged on old Bart Lenwood, knowing him only as a smiling gentleman, and expecting easy victory. They were quickly disillusioned. A hard fist, driven like the head of a steam nigger, broke a jaw for one Newland man; another foe spat out a handful of bleeding teeth; and a kick doubled a third against a stump.

Midway the line Hardy Lenwood was surrounded by a gang of Newland men, with all but his immediate companions out of the fight for the time. A burly giant charged him, swinging aloft a hickory handstick.

"You break handsticks, hey?" roared the big logger. "Break this one!"

He struck at Hardy's head, but the head wasn't there. Hardy ducked sidewise, sprang and caught the stick close to the man's hand. He wrenched it free and struck with it, missing the man's head, but crushing the bone of his shoulder. Hardy swung again, and again. An arm of one man and a leg of another were broken before the attackers fled in terror for other parts of the field.

Newland's men gave back to the level ground along the river bank, with Vance Newland cursing them for a gang of old women. Here he and Bart Lenwood met for the first time. The men on both sides had about all the fight they wanted, but the battle was by no means decided. The leaders stood a little way apart, glowering at each other in the momentary resting spell, while the gray light of morning filtered in along the river bank.

"What you mean—jumping my men when they're at work?" snarled Vance.

"What you mean—sneaking across here and stealing John Beeman's logs, against the peace and dignity of the State?" retorted Lenwood.

"Peace and dignity!" roared Vance. "A lot you care for the peace and dignity, you sneaking timber-thief!"

Old Bart went for him with a bellow of rage. It was plain now that the fight had to be settled by the leaders. The men were through. It was plain to every one, too, that the whipped man would take his gang and leave the field. Such of Lenwood's own men as could keep on their feet were betting odds on Vance Newland.

Old Bart was a good and willing fighter, but he didn't have a chance with the gorilla-built Newland. They were standing cursing each other, as they got breath for the final bout, when Hardy shouldered his way through the crowd.

"THIS is my fight, Vance Newland," he said calmly. "You tried to have me killed, and you are going to answer for it. After that, you can settle with Uncle Bart about your dirty logging business."

"Why—you little snipe!" snorted Vance. "I'll break you in two and throw you in the river. I don't fight boys."

"Nemmin' the boy part," chortled old Bart, who was glad to get a little

more wind before he tackled Newland, and also glad to have Newland trimmed down a little more. "Better give some directions about where you want to be buried, before you jump that little boy."

"You dirty coward!" stormed Newland. "You want to gang on me."

"You're a liar!" roared old Bart. "Everybody knows I ain't afraid of you. You tried to kill Hardy before you tried to steal those logs, and he's got a right to fight you first. Clear a ring, fellows, and here's the rules: if anybody goes in to help either of 'em, I'll break his neck. It's a finish fight. If Vance wins, I'll let him rest as long as he wants and then I'll fight him."

"That's fair!" came the cry from men on both sides of the quarrel, who were glad to be out of the battle and to watch a real fight.

A ring was cleared, and there in the gray dawn began a fight that is still talked of in the logging camps. Vance meant to end the fight with his first blow, for he was anxious to beat old Bart to death. He swung a pile-driver fist at Hardy that would have broken through a brick wall—if it landed—but Hardy was elsewhere when it arrived, and a left hook from somewhere sank into the region of Vance's right kidney. Again Vance rushed, and met a pile-driver right on his nose. The blood gushed, and he wound his long arms around Hardy for a clinch, but for some reason they didn't hold. Vance was flung loose from him and fell sprawling on the ground. In his rage he crawled at Hardy like a bear.

"Stand up and fight like a human!" jeered Hardy.

Bart Lenwood had taught Hardy every trick of logging camp fighting. Hardy had everything Vance had, and something that Vance didn't—boxing skill. He knew how to hit where it would hurt, and he had a punch like a mule's kick.

When Vance gave up trick fighting and went in to fight it out with blows he met more than his match, although the logger could take punishment like a granite cliff. Twice he knocked Hardy kicking and jumped for his face, but each time the younger man evaded him.

Then the driving changed. Vance's blows began to lose steam and his wind got short. Hardy was hitting him when and where he pleased, beating him to death on his feet. Vance's eyes were closing; he was fighting blindly. At last he stumbled toward Hardy, and got it square on the chin. His head went up and back, his body stiffened, and he fell like a log and lay still.

It was none too soon for Hardy. His knees were trembling and his breath came in gasps, as he leaned against a big pine and watched old Bart Lenwood pour water over Vance Newland's face to bring him out of his sleep.

FINALLY Newland sat up, battered, bruised, and almost blind.

"Well," jeered Bart Lenwood, "you fought the boy. Do you want to fight a man now?"

"Go to hell!" growled Vance.

"Ain't ready," grinned Lenwood. "Here's the law. Get your outfit off this island right now—and stay off. If you don't you'll have to fight me, and when you do you'll know you had a fight."

"I know when I'm licked," said Newland. "Where's Hardy?"

"Here I am," said Hardy. "What is it?"

"I just want to shake hands with the best man that was ever in the log-

ging country. A fair fighter that hits like dynamite. I won't do what Bart Lenwood tells me to do; you tell me, and I'll do it."

"All right. Get your outfit off the island and stay off."

Vance Newland turned to his men, and gave orders through his battered and swollen lips:

"Swim them bulls and mules across the river. Get the boats over. Load your tools and clear out of here."

Half a dozen of Newland's men had to be carried to the boats. A score of others could barely move under their own steam. They were all carried across. Vance was the last to go. As he stepped into the boat he said to Lenwood:

"I'll send a couple of boats back to take yo' dead and mangled down the river."

There were no dead and mangled among the Lenwood men, but there were enough with broken arms, gouged eyes, and smashed faces to fill the two boats. Old Bart made Hardy go with them, because he knew the boy was in no shape for a five-mile walk to the lower end of the island.

When the boats were gone Lenwood marched away from the field of battle. He was thinking he had won the victory, as he looked at the wonderful logs on Turtle Island. Then a thought came to him, and he stopped dead still. He hadn't won anything. He had been outfoxed by his nephew. Hardy had played him into whipping Vance Newland's gang to a rag, then had gone in and taken the victory himself. Newland had promised to do anything Hardy told him to do. He would pay old John Beeman any price for his logs that Hardy said was fair.

"The cub! The damn' young rascal!" muttered Lenwood to himself. "We'll see about that. I'll talk to old John myself," and he stalked on after his men, greedily scanning the trees and estimating the footage of those by the trail. He hadn't given up the Turtle Island logs yet; they were what he had fought for, and he meant to have them.

A WEEK passed. John Beeman lay on his bed at the doctor's home, sleeping fitfully at night and looking out the window in the daytime. He didn't talk. His legs were still dead. Bart Lenwood didn't try to talk to him about those Turtle Island logs. In spite of his greed for timber, Bart had the instincts of a gentleman. He was in no hurry for the logs. He had timber enough to run his mill for ten years; he just didn't want anybody else to have the Beeman logs.

One day old John spoke.

"I want to go home," he said.

That was all. He didn't fret, just stated his case. On a sunny morning Hardy laid the old cripple in a boat, and he and Nellie got in and rowed away, up the river.

Another week followed. Hardy was at home nights for a while, then he failed to come home. Old Bart sought Dr. Ralls.

"Doc, is there any chance for old John Beeman to get well?"

"No. His spinal cord is shot in two, or something. He'll linger along until he dies for want of the outdoor life he has always lived."

"Has he got good sense?"

"Good as he ever had."

"I mean, could he make a binding trade?"

"Why, yes; I guess so. That is, if he wanted to."

Old Bart let it go at that. Next morning he crossed to the island alone

and took the trail to John Beeman's cabin. Hardy was standing outside the cabin door.

"Good morning, Uncle Bart," greeted Hardy.

"Good morning, son. Step out here a minute. I want to speak to you." When they were away from the house: "Now, about these Turtle Island logs. Don't you reckon old John is well enough to make a dicker with me?"

"Yes, I guess he is, but there's no need. I'll sell you half of 'em."

"*You'll* sell 'em?"

"Yes. They belong to me—and my wife."

"Your what?"

"My wife. Nellie Beeman that was."

"Well, as I live! . . . But about them logs. Why won't you let me have all of 'em?"

"Because I sold Vance Newland the upper half of the island," and Hardy named the price.

"What! Do you think I'm the mint? Nary man on earth would pay that for logs!"

"You don't have to pay it. Vance will take the other half, too, at that price."

"He won't do any such a thing! I'll take 'em . . . but if anybody ever says I'm a fox again, he's a liar. You're the fox in the Lenwood family—but you're a fair fox."

"Thank you, Uncle Bart," laughed Hardy. "Come in and see the missis."

As they went toward the cabin old Bart chuckled and said:

"Name the first boy for me, Hardy, and I'll give him a gold cant-hook to cut his teeth on."

THE END.

Probing for Power

FOR many years certain scientists have been advocating the theory that immense sources of power could be given world industries if holes of sufficient depth were bored in the earth's crust. Although the cost of drilling these holes would run into millions of dollars, taking years of labor, the contention has been that the enormous power to be tapped would make it worth while. It has been carefully estimated that to bore a hole to a sufficient depth to carry out the theory of science (some twelve miles) would necessitate the huge expenditure of some forty-five million dollars! The actual task of drilling operations would occupy more than eight years.

This theory has been put into practice on a small scale in Italy within the last few years. Such a hole has been bored in the volcanic region near Lardello, and it is yielding a seemingly inexhaustible supply of volcanic steam that is used for generating turbines.

The deepest hole yet bored into the earth is in Virginia, where a company was drilling for oil. When a depth of over a mile and a half had been reached the drill stuck and the cable parted. After many unsuccessful attempts to retrieve the cable, the hole had to be abandoned. At Czuchow, in Silesia, there is a hole which probes seven thousand three hundred and eighty-six feet into the bowels of the earth. This is the deepest successful boring in the world, for thousands of barrels of oil are extracted every year.

William David Belbeck.

Her mad dance seemed to be inviting him alone!

Jungle Justice

Gillian Hazeltine, famed criminal lawyer, had vowed he wouldn't defend a single case on his trip to the Far East—but no man could defy the Sultan of Senang, the world's last absolute monarch, and escape grave consequences

By GEORGE F. WORTS

Author of "Murder! Murder!" "The Lost Punch," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

GILLIAN HAZELTINE, called "The Silver Fox," for his cleverness as a criminal lawyer, is resting from his court room activities on a trip to the Far East. On his way to meet his wife in Singapore, he stops at Saigon in French Indo-China.

A Eurasian, Mr. Chong, tries to persuade him to defend one Richard Fowler, accused of murdering a devil worshiper in the realm of Chong's master, the Sultan of Senang. Fowler's *fiancée*, Miss Thorne, also pleads with him. The Sultan, it seems, is a highly educated, ruthless, imperious eccentric who wants to be amused by the trial over which he plans to preside. Gillian refuses—and is kidnaped in the night and taken aboard the Sultan's yacht.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST ABSOLUTE MONARCH.

GILLIAN, stripped of all clothing, lay stretched out between four stakes driven into the ground at the four corners of an imaginary square. From a stake to each hand and ankle stretched a taut thong.

This story began in the Argosy for October 11.

There were sharp tappings as limp black things, like deflated toy balloons, dropped from the trees above him and struck the ground near by. He knew from what Mr. Chong had told him that they were elephant leeches; that they would squirm and wiggle until they reached him, that they would attach themselves to his skin and suck his blood until he was a lifeless sack of bones—if the beetles did not accomplish their horrid task first.

Black beetles they were, with claws like sugar tongs. In myriads they were coming out of the surrounding jungle toward him, preparing to strip the flesh from his bones, shred by shred.

In the trees above him were bright little eyes—the dwarfed aborigines who dispatched their enemies with blowgun darts dipped in the deadly poison of the kreit adder.

Some distance away was a throne of wrought gold glittering and twinkling with precious stones; sapphires and emeralds and rubies and diamonds. A fat brown man in white wearing a white turban sat upon the throne. It was the Sultan of Senang. He was saying:

"This is how I deal with Americans who defy my will, Mr. Hazeltine."

Gillian writhed, but the more he writhed the deeper the thongs bit into his wrists and ankles. In a despairing voice, he said:

"I will do anything you say, your majesty."

"It is too late. I will sit here and watch until you are nothing but a gleaming skeleton. I will feast upon your agonies, you stubborn fool."

Gillian groaned. The queer tapping of the giant leeches as they tumbled from the trees was sharply repeated.

With a violent, convulsive twist, Gillian sat up. He was dripping with perspiration. Straight ahead of him was a large round spot of pinkish-golden light. In the center of the circle a golden finger pointed upward.

Gillian uttered a sigh of relief that was almost a sob. He was in his stateroom aboard the Lotus. The engines were stopped. The finger bisecting his porthole must be the gilded spire of a *wat,* a temple.

This must be Senang. Mr. Chong had said at dinner last night that they would reach Senang, if all went well, shortly before dawn.

The tapping Gillian had heard so queerly through his dream was sharply repeated. Gillian got out of bed and opened the corridor door.

A brown-skinned young man in a white uniform stood at attention in the corridor. The double golden bars of a captain were at his shoulders. Gold braid was looped across his chest upon which were gold, silver and bronze decorations in a neat row.

He saluted briskly and said:

"I am Captain Yanglat, sir; of the Sultan's bodyguard. The Sultan has sent me to greet you with his compliments and to request the distinction of your presence at breakfast with his majesty in the imperial palace."

"You don't tell me," Gillian said.

"If you will permit me to enter, sir, I shall be pleased to instruct you, if you wish, in the formalities of approaching his majesty."

"Come right in," Gillian said cordially.

CAPTAIN YANGLAT, of the imperial bodyguard, stiffly entered.

"Breakfast will be served in one hour, sir. I believe you have ample time to shave and dress. Attire will be informal."

Gillian wondered what formal breakfast attire might be.

"It may seem presumptuous of me," the young Senangese officer continued: "I should perhaps mention that this sultanate is the last surviving absolute monarchy in the world. In Sultan Chaddore Wang Chot Shoddor is invested the ultimate legislative, administrative and judicial authority. Certain forms have been retained which may go against your democratic spirit—" He hesitated significantly.

"No," said Gillian, who was highly amused. "I desire, above all things, to conform to form. Tell me just what I am to do, captain."

Captain Yanglat seemed tremendously relieved.

"When one enters his majesty's presence," he said, "one does not look into the Sultan's eyes, but at his feet."

"An old Spanish custom," Gillian murmured.

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"Nothing, captain. Go on."

"With your eyes downcast, you approach to within six paces of his majesty. You then hold both palms out and upward. Like this."

Captain Yanglat demonstrated.

"You do not make any attempt to shake his majesty's hand. If he wishes to shake your hand, he will advance and do so."

"When do I raise my eyes from his majesty's feet?"

"After he has shaken your hand, if he does so. That is an indication that he has condescended to your level—for the time being; that is, for the duration of your visit in Senang.

"Now, in conversation with his majesty, you must never speak first, but must wait until spoken to. You will address him as 'Your Majesty,' never as 'Sultan.'"

"I suppose," said Gillian amiably, "that that would be insultin' to the Sultan."

The captain's little black eyes met his coldly. There was no responsive smile at his tight little mouth.

"If his majesty wishes to place your relationship on an informal basis, he will address you by your given name. Upon his stooping to that, you may safely violate all these rules I have given you and treat him as if he were an equal."

"I see," Gillian said.

"It pleases me to say," Captain Yanglat said, "that his majesty has delegated me to escort you while you are in Senang. It is the first time in five hundred years that a captain of the Sultan's bodyguard has been assigned as the bodyguard of a—visitor."

"I deeply appreciate the honor," Gillian said.

"I will be useful as an interpreter," the captain explained. "I speak perfectly not only the dialect of Senang, but French, Siamese, Mandarin and southern Chinese, Japanese, Italian, and thirty dialects of Indo-China. For the duration of your visit, I am at your service."

"That," Gillian said, "is bully." He felt a little uneasy in the presence of so much formality.

WHEN he had shaved and got into a suit of fresh white duck, Gillian accompanied Captain Yanglat ashore. The Lotus was tied up to a clean modern concrete wharf, and from it a macadam road in excellent condition swerved off amid mahogany, breadfruit and tamarind trees. Parked near by was a Rolls Royce.

Gillian was disappointed. A concrete dock, macadam roads, a smart new Rolls Royce in the heart of the

Orient! But as he drove along and Captain Yanglat, in the tonneau beside him, talked, Gillian's disappointment vanished. On their right and left were temples, some of them four thousand years old—older than the Angkor Wat itself. And in the distance, on a low hill, rose a palace of marble, tinted rose by the rising sun, Gillian supposed, until Captain Yanglat explained that every block of it was of rose marble.

"In its architectural grandeur, it rivals the Taj Mahal. Few occidental eyes have looked upon that rose castle, Mr. Hazeltine. It was built by slaves captured in the Tonkinese wars eight centuries ago. The present Sultan has modernized it. He has installed every modern convenience."

"Is the Sultan married?"

"He has more than one hundred and twenty-five wives and concubines," the captain said. "I might add that it is the height of bad form to ask any questions about, or make any reference to his wives."

"I see," said Gillian.

"The harem is that low rambling building to the left," Captain Yanglat said. "No native woman has ever stepped foot in the palace itself, and only one woman in history. Miss Janet Thorne and her father have dined and lunched with the Sultan at times."

Gillian had learned from Janet Thorne, during a long talk with her on the after deck of the Lotus yesterday, that she and her father lived, when in Senang, in one of the outlying *salas*, which, she had explained, are small comfortable buildings to be found in every Indo-Chinese and Siamese town for the comfort of travelers. Her father, Harrison Thorne, was an archæologist, searching Indo-China for jungle-hidden ruins of ancient cities and temples.

"On the right," Captain Yanglat was saying, "are the sacred elephant temples."

"Does the Sultan worship elephants as well as devils?"

"It is the belief of the *nat* priests," the captain said, "that certain powerful species of *nats* inhabit the albino elephant. *Nat* worship is an involved and complex religion. The Sultan is a devout student, and will doubtless tell you a great many interesting things. The yearly devil dance will take place to-night, I believe, in a basin in the hills about five miles from Senang. The Sultan may compel your attendance—or forbid your presence. It will depend on what the priests say.

"The elephants in these temples are secured in the spring of every fourth year in an elephant drive similar to the Siamese elephant drive at Chengmei. Some elephants are saved for work elephants; the more pronounced of the albinos are placed in the temples—a temple to each animal. We have at present thirty-seven fine specimens."

The quiet of the early morning, disturbed only by the captain's voice and the sweet purr of the motor, was suddenly intruded upon by a reiterant metallic din.

"A temple gong?" Gillian guessed.

"No, sir; that is the *tha-thong*—the 'bird-that-beats-on-gold.'"

THE maroon car swung in between massive gates, with a sentry, at present arms, on either side. Just ahead was the palace—tier on tier of rose marble rising until that edifice, aglow with the rising sun, was a palace not of this earth but of clouds and dreams on a shimmery August afternoon.

The car drew up smartly under a *porte-cochère* of weathered bronze. On

either side of a wide flight of white marble steps slept a great bronze panther.

Four guards in white, with drawn swords against vizors, stood behind the bronze panthers.

Captain Yanglat descended and stood at attention for Gillian to alight. Gillian, with his new sun helmet tucked under one arm, followed him up the steps.

Tonkinese in immaculate white threw open great bronze doors. Within was another flight of white marble stairs. They went up and up.

Gillian was conducted through a white marble hall, up still another flight of marble steps, down a great corridor, its walls bristling with the heads of tigers, panthers, wild boars; then on through an antechamber.

"Remember!" Captain Yanglat said in a cautioning whisper. "Look at his feet, not his eyes."

But Gillian cheated. Reverence for insolent little up-country Sultans did not sit as well upon him as perhaps it should have. Servants threw open massive teakwood doors. Gillian tingled with anticipation as those doors swung. He would not have been surprised to have been inducted into a room with walls, floor and ceiling of solid gold, studded with emeralds, or with the glimpse of a throne such as the one he had seen in his vivid dream, with a fat little Sultan ensconced smugly upon it, scepter in hand, crown slightly askew upon his plump little head.

He caught a glimpse of a room with smooth walls of cobalt-blue, a room not more than twenty-four feet square, in the center of which was a fountain and a pool in which goldfish disported.

"Eyes down!" hissed Captain Yanglat. Then, in a voice which boomed: "His Royal Majesty the Sultan Chaddore Wang Chot Shoddor, King and Ruler of Senang—Mr. Gillian Hazeltine, of America!"

Gillian's eyes were down, but through his lashes he stole a glimpse of the man who was the world's remaining absolute monarch—and with a great effort resisted a smile.

Sultan Chaddore Wang Chot Shoddor stood beside the fountain, smoking a cigarette. He wore white flannel plus-fours. But for his oblique little eyes, he might have been a darkly tanned real estate agent of Greenwich, Connecticut! There was about him the air of a man about to sell something.

Advancing into the room, Gillian kept his eyes on his majesty's feet. They were shod in large, well-polished brown oxfords.

CHAPTER VII.

SULTAN AND PAINTED PRIEST.

OBEYING instructions, Gillian held his eyes focused on the large brown oxfords. When they seemed to him to be about six paces away, he stopped. At that instant, Captain Yanglat nudged him.

A deep resonant voice said: "Mr. Hazeltine, I welcome you to Senang. I am delighted to know you."

A lean brown hand shot out. Gillian, now permitted to look up, looked up. And as he took his first close-up inspection of Chaddore Wang Chot Shoddor, last absolute monarch on earth, the twinkle vanished from Gillian's steel-blue eyes.

For here, indeed, was a man not to be taken lightly. Enmeshed though he was in outworn feudalistic form and panoply, he was a man to be reckoned

with. He was tall, as tall, as Gillian, and he appeared to be as hard as iron. The hand gripping Gillian's was like steel.

"I trust that you had a pleasant journey."

"A delightful journey, your majesty."

The cold brown eyes were boring into Gillian's, as if taking his measure. When the Sultan spoke, Gillian had been aware of a slight shock. His teeth were black, his lips blackened and thick. Gillian had not supposed that a personage as high as a sultan would be a betel-chewer; he had supposed that only the natives chewed betel. The black teeth were disconcerting. They lent his majesty a fantastic sinister touch which, Gillian would discover, went perfectly with his personality.

"I have heard a great deal about you, Mr. Hazeltine. I have followed your brilliant career in American newspapers and magazines. It is an honor to have you as my guest. You may retire, captain."

Captain Yanglat clicked his heels together, saluted smartly, and backed out of the royal presence.

The Sultan was pulling one end of his ragged black mustache, a practice which proved to be habitual.

"We are breakfasting in the garden, Mr. Hazeltine."

"Yes, your majesty."

The Sultan, on firm heels, led the way. As they approached the far end of the room, doors magically swung open. The two men entered a small hall. On one side was—an elevator. The door stood open. The Sultan entered the elevator and Gillian followed. A servant shut the grilled bronze door; the Sultan pressed the top button of a vertical row, and the cage shot up.

At the fifth floor, it stopped. A servant, waiting, threw open the door; the Sultan stepped out, and Gillian followed.

"The day will come," the Sultan announced suddenly and enigmatically, "when no man will dare enter my presence without kneeling."

Gillian said, "Yes, your majesty," in calm tones.

"You doubt me?" the other asked.

"I do not quite understand, your majesty."

"I will explain, Mr. Hazeltine. I am the last absolute monarch on earth. Do you realize what opportunities that gives me? I will show you something."

THEY emerged upon a wide flat roof. Below them were the spires of temples protruding through the green floor formed of treetops. In the distance, the risen sun made of the river a bronze ribbon.

With the Sultan at his elbow, Gillian rounded a corner—and looked into the heart of a tropical garden. Palms grew in profusion. And flowers—the most gorgeous flowers Gillian had ever seen. There were blooms with long blue petals, others in sprays of moon-white, like gigantic lilies-of-the-valley, and there were enormous red flowers, as bright as fresh blood, all spilling upon the still warm air a perfume so sweet that it was sickening. On one bush, purple night flowers of great size were, even as Gillian watched, folding umbrella-fashion into long quills.

The Sultan stopped before a bush laden with hibiscus blooms. He lifted one of the flowers tenderly in his hand. His thick lips parted upon his black teeth in a queer smile.

"This, Mr. Hazeltine, is the royal death flower of Senang."

"Yes, your majesty."

"If I were to pluck this flower and

toss it at your feet, one of my guardsmen would instantly appear and arrest you. He would take you away, if I did not intervene. In due course, at a certain phase of the moon, propitious to my death gods, you would be executed. Is there in the world to-day a king with such absolute power? Let me demonstrate."

With a sudden fierce gesture, he tore the red flower from its stem. He tossed the crumpled red blossom at Gillian's feet. Gillian's left temple began to throb.

From nowhere, so it seemed to the lawyer, a young officer in white appeared. He approached the Sultan and saluted. He whipped his sword from its scabbard and addressed the gleaming point at Gillian's heart.

"At this point, fortunately for you, Mr. Hazeltine," the Sultan said, "the demonstration ends. You may retire, lieutenant."

"Your majesty!" The lieutenant clicked his heels, slapped his sword back into its scabbard, saluted and withdrew.

"If I had said nothing, Mr. Hazeltine, you would have been taken away. At the proper phase of the moon you would have been put to death. In Senang, our method of execution is the Ling-Chi — the death-of-a-thousand-cuts. One of my ancestors, a great rover, brought back that idea from the first of the Mings. In no other ruler on earth is invested this divine right of kings. Is that a sign?"

"I do not quite understand, your majesty."

"I will gladly explain. I do not boast. Nor do I betray a secret. It is written in the stars that I shall some day be the conqueror of the world. I will organize the forces of Indo-China, the unhappy hordes of India, the blood-thirsty bands of Afghanistan and Beluchistan and Arabia, the restless millions of China, the greedy millions of Japan. It is so written. My priests declare that some day before long a powerful leader shall rise in the East and conquer the West. I am that man. You are trying not to smile. You believe I am pompous and vain and arrogant—an insolent little Sultan."

"The idea, your majesty, merely strikes me as fantastic."

"But is it fantastic? Not at all! Consider the awakening East. Then consider the West. The blood of the white race has run thin. Luxury-loving, jazz-mad America! Anæmic England! Degenerate France! Hollow-shelled Germany! Insane Russia! Inflated Italy! Decrepit Spain! The bungling Balkans! It will not be war —it will be massacre. But let us talk of pleasanter subjects."

"Yes, your majesty."

GILLIAN had reached the conclusion that Chaddore Wang Chot Shoddor was more than a little mad. He would have described him in court as an epileptoid with Napoleonic visions. He was a strange mixture, this ruler of Senang; strongly shrewd yet weakly superstitious, a believer in all modernity, yet a tool in the hands of unscrupulous priests.

The Sultan went ahead of Gillian through a lane between high bushes covered with small purple fruit. In a clearing beyond, a table was set for two. The service was gold. The rays of the rising sun struck gleams from gold plates, forks, spoons, goblets.

The table was placed at the edge of the roof. Below, at a distance, was the river. For the first time, Gillian saw that it forked as it approached Senang.

His majesty chuckled. "Senang is an island. I call it Manhattan. Across the river is Brooklyn. On the other bank is New Jersey. What do you think of Senang, Mr. Hazeltine?"

"How many miles of paved road have you?" Gillian asked.

"Three," the Sultan said. "The red roof you see down there is my garage. I have twenty-seven cars. Senang is a small kingdom, but," he added grimly, "it will grow. It will grow!"

His eyes were shimmering. Gillian watched him sharply. The Sultan flung out a brown hand. Heavy gold bracelets clinked. A diamond as large as a cat's eye glittered on his thumb.

"To-night you will be my guest at a spectacle few white men have witnessed—and lived to describe: the devil dance of the Shan girls. Once each year, on the night of the first full Mango Moon, this dance is held to determine who shall be the spirit bride of Min Magayi, king of all the *nats*. We of Senang are devil-worshipers." Abruptly the Sultan dismissed the subject. "Let us have breakfast."

Servants appeared with golden trays of fruit: grapes, mangos, papayas, rose apples, nectarines. Gillian was introduced to the most exotic of all oriental fruits, the mangosteen, purple on the outside and cerise on the inside. At its center was a cluster of white pods the juice of which yielded the taste of the pineapple, of the orange, of the banana, with a curious after-flavor of turpentine!

The Sultan was a voluble talker. He talked of his college days, of his great contempt for democracy and for bolshevism; lastly he spoke of Gillian's nationally famous cases. He proved to be familiar with them all.

Over their cigars he said:

"Why did I invite you here? I consider you one of the shrewdest legal minds in America. I, too, have a shrewd legal mind. I frankly consider my mind shrewder, more brilliant, than yours. The great danger faced by an absolute monarch is that he will grow egotistical. Frankly, I wished to test the steel of my mind against the flint of yours. The case of Richard Fowler is a test case."

"WHAT is your opinion of that case, your majesty?" asked Gillian noncommittally.

"I have already rendered my opinion," the Sultan said. "Three months ago when Richard Fowler was brought before me, accused of the murder of an American named Ezra Meeker, I reviewed it impartially. After a fair hearing, I decided that Richard Fowler was guilty. I tossed him a hibiscus. He would have been executed a week ago if I had not heard that you were coming to Saigon. I decided to have the case retried with you as his counsel."

"And you as the prosecutor?" Gillian said.

"In the oriental capacity of a presiding magistrate. My legal adviser, Chong, will directly conduct the prosecution."

"The trial is to be impartial?"

"Quite."

"How can it be, your majesty?"

"I will make it so, Mr. Hazeltine. Each side will play fair. You will lack the soft-headed jury upon whose emotions you customarily play. Every attempt you make to confuse the issue with the tricky methods for which you are so notorious will be countered with tricky methods by me. There will be no perjured witnesses, no suborned witnesses."

"If you are so certain," Gillian said, "that Richard Fowler is guilty, what

possible good can come of reopening this case?"

"Have you not gone into court to defend men when public sentiment was overwhelmingly against them? After breakfast you may confer with Richard Fowler. If you decide that he has no possible defense, there will be no trial."

"Very well, your majesty."

A servant had approached. He said a few words to the Sultan in Senangese. Gillian was watching the Sultan, and saw his eyes suddenly narrow and begin to glitter, while the skin about them grew hard and lumpy. And it seemed to Gillian that the Sultan's dark skin turned a shade paler.

He said nervously: "You will go, Mr. Hazeltine." Then: "No—you will remain. This man who wishes to see me is my head priest. He is my brother. I am sure you will be interested."

The servant withdrew. A moment later the tallest human being Gillian had ever seen stalked into the clearing. He must have stood seven feet high. A dark red turban was bound tightly about his head.

At first glance Gillian believed that the Sultan's brother was suffering the effects of a recent horrible burn. His face was vermilion. Then Gillian discovered that his face was made up with grease paint, smeared with vermilion paint or paste.

An area perhaps two inches deep under his eyes was blued. And these areas of blue gave to his inky eyes a curious malignancy. His teeth, like his brother's, were black from betel chewing, and his lips were swollen and discolored.

The priest's costume consisted of a single garment, a long, loose, dark-red robe, matching the turban in color. On his feet were grass sandals with leather loops branching out in an "A" from the tips.

The Sultan had risen. Gillian glanced from the fantastic vermilion face to that of his brother. The Sultan told Gillian:

"He speaks no English, but he will understand every word we say. His name is Kouang Chot Lenchow. Kindly do not attempt to speak to him."

IT seemed to Gillian that the clearing was suddenly aswarm with servants. They came bearing large gold trays, and Gillian watched with fascination. The Sultan seated himself, cross-legged, on the roof. Kouang Chot Lenchow followed his example. The two brothers faced each other with an array of golden trays between them. Gillian recognized some of the contents, for he had seen the betel-chewers of Hongkong.

Each man reached into a tray and selected a brown slice of betel nut. This he wrapped in a fresh green leaf of the pan vine with a little pellet of chunam. Upon the pellet was sprinkled cardamom and turmeric.

With a simultaneous gesture, each man inserted betel, leaf, and chunam-pellet into his mouth.

In silence they chewed, and Gillian watched the vermilion face of the *nat* priest. Those malignant inky eyes roved in turn over his face, and Gillian felt uncomfortable. He would hate to have this giant for his enemy. If the Sultan was slightly mad, his brother was a stark maniac.

The two men began to expectorate. Blood-red streams of juice left their mouths. And presently they began to talk. The dialect of Senang was sharp and full of sibilants.

The Sultan turned presently to Gillian and said: "My brother greets you.

'A month ago in the stars he read that you were coming. He does not quite understand you. He says you are a sorcerer from a far-away land. He feels that you are a *nat* priest in your own land—a powerful *nat* priest. He says you have many enemies. He favors your visit, which is fortunate. You arrived at the most propitious side of the moon. He repeats my invitation to visit the devil dance of the Shan girls in the Valley of the Dead to-night."

The Sultan exchanged another volley of sibilants with Kouang Chot Lenchow and again turned to Gillian. "You may go now, Mr. Hazeltine. You will make your residence, not in a *sala,* but in this palace. I will not see you again until after dinner to-night. At eight o'clock elephants will be ready to take us to the Valley of the Dead."

"Yes, your majesty."

Gillian, in a state of great nervousness, withdrew. He did not back out of the royal presence. But at the mangosteen tree he turned and looked back. The malignant eyes of the head *nat* priest were upon him. And they seemed to contain a twinkle of humor or at least of rational intelligence—or did Gillian imagine that?

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS.

CAPTAIN YANGLAT was waiting for Gillian under the *porte-cochère* with the maroon Rolls Royce. His oriental calm was disturbed. He said anxiously: "Is it true, Mr. Hazeltine, that Prince Kouang is visiting with his majesty?"

Gillian, suspecting political undercurrents, replied: "Yes, captain."

"Is Prince Kouang still with his majesty?"

"He is."

Captain Yanglat looked as if he would have liked to ask more questions. He looked more anxious than ever, but he only said:

"I am at your service, sir. Where do you wish to go? What do you wish to do? Perhaps you would like to inspect the botanical garden—or the sacred elephant temples."

"I want to see Richard Fowler. But first we will stop at the *sala* where Professor Thorne is staying."

"Yes, sir." Captain Yanglat gave an order in Senangese to the driver, and the Rolls glided off, down the lane of banyan trees.

The *sala* was built on the edge of a *klong,* or canal, a spidery structure on bamboo stilts with wide bands of gum to discourage insects which crawled. The roof was of nipa thatch. A rope ladder hung down from a doorway to the ground.

Janet Thorne's face appeared at the opening. Her expression was sad, but her brown eyes lighted up when she saw Gillian.

"Have you seen the Sultan?" she asked.

"I just had breakfast with him," Gillian said.

"What did he say about Richard?"

"That he was to have a fair trial. I'm on my way to the jail now. But first I wanted to have a word with your father. Would you like to come along?"

"The Sultan won't let me see Richard. I haven't seen him in two months."

"That order," spoke up Captain Yanglat, "has been revoked."

The girl's eyes grew so bright that Gillian knew she was on the verge of tears. A tall, lean man with a brown beard was standing behind her. Miss

Thorne descended the ladder; her father followed. He was a solemn, dignified man with the preoccupied air so often observed in men of his calling. He peered at Gillian through thick, tortoise-rimmed spectacles.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Hazeltine. If anybody can save that young man from the fate that hangs over him, I am sure that you are the man."

"Let us," Gillian said, "take a little walk, professor."

Captain Yanglat looked bored. He lighted a Japanese cigarette and looked up at the sky.

At a safe distance from him Gillian said:

"I have heard your daughter's side of this strange case, professor. And I have heard as much as the Sultan chooses to say. Before seeing the young man I would like to have your opinion."

"MY opinion," said the professor, with more feeling than Gillian expected, "is simply this: Turn any white man loose in these jungles for more than two years—and the jungles get to him. They fill his mind with queer ideas. He casts out his God and accepts strange gods. His personality changes. The jungles do things to a man that you cannot possibly comprehend, Mr. Hazeltine. You are doubtless charmed, fascinated by them. You hear tales of the death that creeps and squirms and flies in them—and you are thrilled.

"It is not fair to import you to handle this case. You will be dealing with forces which you have not been given sufficient time to comprehend. I can see it in your eyes, if I did not already know. Your eyes are relaxed. Look at mine! Look at my daughter's!"

"Richard Fowler—" Gillian began.

"Richard Fowler is only a specimen case. When he came to Senang three years ago he was a straight-thinking, splendid young man. You will find him now bewildered and confused."

"You mean, he lacked character?"

"Character has nothing to do with it. The jungle has got him. The only cure is to take him away from the jungle. It is getting my daughter the same way.

"Late at night I have watched her when a distant temple drum was beating. Have you ever heard the temple drums of the Karens? It is a sound which puts the voodoo goatskin drum, beaten on by a finger dipped in blood, to shame. There is something maddening about the rhythm. I have seen her, half asleep, leave her cot and move her hands in time to that rhythm. It is the very essence of all sensuality.

"I can see from your mouth that you are inclined to be skeptical. You come fresh from an American city. Even here, in the heart of this devilish jungle, you are deceived. What do you see? You are carried away by a pink palace. You are amazed at the Rolls Royce you ride in. You are impressed by electric elevators, soldiers in smart uniforms, refrigerating machines. Do you not realize, Mr. Hazeltine, that all these things are only a thin shell that separates this vicious land from a barbarism centuries old?"

"The Sultan—" Gillian began.

"The Sultan meets you in a suit made by a Bond Street tailor. He serves you a typical American breakfast, even to ham and eggs, toast and coffee. True?"

Gillian nodded.

"Does it prove to you that this land has reformed? Mr. Hazeltine, let me warn you. Watch out! The Sultan is a

barbarian. He is essentially and wholly oriental. I do not know what his plan is for bringing you here, but I would suspect his every motive, his every move, every utterance. You may be convinced that he brought you here for the farcical trial of a man who is doomed to die. I remain skeptical. I believe there is some sinister motive."

Gillian was inclined to take this warning lightly.

"After all, professor, I am an American citizen."

"In the heart of the most barbarous civilization the world has known since Carthage! What rational treatment can you expect from a man who believes in devils, who sincerely believes that these devils, or *nats,* inhabit trees, rivers, cattle, serpents, insects—the very air! An Oxford and a Harvard graduate! Bah! The man actually believes in the transference of souls. I tell you, it is his religion. Prince Kouang is responsible. You are in danger of some fiendish thing every instant you are here. So am I."

"WHY don't you leave?"

The professor's shoulders sagged. "I would have left months ago. I am tired. I loathe and detest the jungle, I loathe and detest Senang. I cannot leave without my daughter. My daughter will not leave until Richard Fowler's fate is definitely settled. And the man is doomed. Even if the Sultan were to give him his freedom, there is still Prince Kouang to deal with. Prince? The man's a fiend!"

"I have met him," Gillian said. He was beginning to feel a little sick. The situation was utterly involved, utterly insoluble.

The professor's eyes were shining eagerly, almost greedily.

"You saw him? You met him? What did you think?"

"A dangerous man," Gillian said.

"He has the Sultan terrified. Prince Kouang is the real power behind this throne. Mr. Hazeltine, what can you do? You are a stranger in a strange land. I know you are a brilliant man, but how can even the most brilliant man hope to come off best when he deals with fiends? Go and talk with Richard. Perhaps you can see a way. If I could only help!"

In silence the two men returned to the waiting car. Captain Yanglat, still bored, still smoking, was gazing up dreamily into the hot blue sky.

Janet Thorne, slim, cool, alluring in white silk shirtwaist, white linen breeches, and riding boots, with a sun helmet perched jauntily on her pretty head, was waiting by the rope ladder.

Gillian helped her into the car. She was trembling. Her eyes were wet. As she settled down beside Gillian she whispered:

"Do you think there is hope?"

"There is always hope," said Gillian.

But he was looking at the fairyland structure of rose marble in the distance. Against the hot blue sky it was so innocent—like an illustration in a book of children's stories! Behind that shell of innocence . . .

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER MAN'S SOUL.

THE jail of Senang was a modern structure. It was built of blocks of white stone. The windows were grilled with steel lattice. And a turnkey in a red-and-orange-and-blue *sarong* conducted Gillian and Janet Thorne down the corridor.

It was, to Gillian, a painfully familiar experience. The girl clung to his arm fiercely, as if she were not sure of her footing. Her slim warm body was trembling.

Gillian caught a glimpse, through heavy bars, of a pale face, of furious young blue eyes under tousled tawny hair, and the eyes were staring not at him but at the girl on his arm.

Miss Thorne uttered a little cry that was half sob, half croon, and ran to the cell door. Gillian averted his head. Such scenes hurt him deeply. They were trying to clasp each other through the bars, clinging to each other fiercely and murmuring the tragic litany of lovers: Nothing shall ever part us.

Whispers. Sighs.

"I must do something about this," said Gillian to himself.

"Mr. Hazeltine!" That was the sweet, husky voice of Janet Thorne. He walked over. Her face was illuminated with a glory of pride. Tears quivered on the brink. She was gripping her lower lip between white teeth.

"This is Richard Fowler. Richard, this is Gillian Hazeltine—the great American lawyer. He has come all the way up here to do everything he can for you. He says there is hope of saving you."

Gillian met the fierce young eyes.

"Hope? In this place?" the Sultan's prisoner cried.

"Darling, you mustn't take that attitude. You know that Mr. Hazeltine is one of the most brilliant lawyers in America."

"This isn't America."

"But, dearest, he will do something. He will think of ways. I'm going to leave you two together. The Sultan says I can see you as often as I wish, now. I will spend the entire afternoon here."

"You—sweet!" said the young man huskily.

When the firm tapping of the girl's bootheels had ceased, Gillian said:

"Did you kill Ezra Meeker?"

"I did!"

"Why did you?"

"Because he stole my soul!"

Gillian started, sighed. "Yes, I've heard all about that devil-worship and soul-transference. But if you expect any help from me, young man, you are going to come clean. Wait! Don't talk yet. I have been singularly fortunate in saving the lives of men for whom the future was very dark. But I can only succeed when my client comes absolutely clean. There is nothing more embarrassing than to have a client suddenly discover, in court, that he has something important to say that he hasn't said before. If I can help you, I will. If I can get you out of this damned country—I will. But—come clean. If lying is to be done, I'll attend to it. If trickery is to be resorted to, I'll think up the tricks. What I want from you is the simple unvarnished truth."

THE fierce young eyes stared at him unblinkingly.

"I have told you the truth," Richard Fowler said.

"You mean, you are a devil-worshiper?"

"No, sir. I mean, there is something in devil-worship. These priests have practiced their ceremonies for thousands of years. They can transfer the soul of one man into the body of another."

"You believe that?" Gillian said earnestly.

"I know it! Didn't it happen to me?"

"If you believe that it happened, it

happened. Why did Ezra Meeker steal your soul?"

"Because he hated his own!"

"Do you," Gillian said, "notice any perceptible change in your—er—soul since the alleged transfer took place?"

"I do, or I would not take stock in it. You see what I am now—a hateful person? Since the day the transfer took place, I have been like this. Before that, I was—cheerful, always laughing, always joking. The change took place instantly."

"Were you aware that this soul transference was going to happen or was it accomplished without your knowledge?"

"I was aware of it. But it could have been done without my being aware of it. These *nat* priests can do such things. Meeker wanted my soul. He offered me a fortune if I would make the transfer voluntarily. I would not. He then bribed the priests."

"Did Prince Kouang take part in this ceremony?"

"No, sir. They were jungle priests."

"Very well," the lawyer said. "After you had returned to consciousness—I presume you were drugged—you realized that your soul and Ezra Meeker's had been switched. In your fury, you laid your hand upon the most convenient weapon—and killed him?"

"I was carrying an automatic pistol. I took it out of its holster and emptied it into him."

"Ezra Meeker died instantly?"

"Instantly."

"IN that case, what became of your soul—that is, the soul in Ezra Meeker's body?"

"It went to the *nat* hell-heaven."

"Do the devil-worshipers offer any possible way by which it can be resurrected from the hell-heaven and returned to your body?"

"I believe that the high priests can do such a thing. It is a difficult and dangerous ritual."

"Your old soul is not, then, hovering about near you?"

"No, sir."

"Do you think it is possible for you, in the course of time, to accommodate yourself to Ezra Meeker's soul?"

"I could never accommodate myself to it!" Fowler cried. "It is like a poison inside me. I am constantly flying into fits of fury. Just as Meeker used to do. I am always sullen, sore at every one—as Meeker was. I am nothing but the shell of myself, occupied by Meeker's vile, rotten soul!"

"I will give you something to think over," Gillian said. "This evening I will return for a further talk. I will want details. The trial begins to-morrow morning. But until I see you to-night, I want you to ponder this carefully. To begin: I am a very rationally-minded man. I am neither religious nor atheistic. I have just come from a very rationally-minded country—America.

"On the other hand, you have exposed yourself to religious fanatics. You have lived in unhealthy jungles. Doubtless, you have from time to time contracted one form or another of jungle fevers. In other words, your mind, because of physical and mental influences, is apt not to be as normal, as rational as is my mind. Will you agree to that?"

"Yes, sir; that's possible."

"Will you go a step farther and agree that this entire belief of yours in soul transference is apt to be a mere hallucination? Don't speak! My very rational, well-balanced mind comes into this oriental jungle—and meets your

irrational mind. Understand, I am talking frankly."

"You are saying I am crazy!"

"I am saying that, on this one subject, your mind is temporarily unbalanced. If I were to take you into any court in the world, I would unhesitatingly enter a plea of insanity. That's what I want you to think over. Talk it over with Janet this afternoon if you wish. But center your mind on it. *You must not go into that court room tomorrow believing in any such rot as the transference of souls!*"

The fierce blue eyes flashed at him.

"I—" Richard Fowler began. "But it's true!" he shouted.

"Think it over until this evening," Gillian said and walked away.

CHAPTER X.

THE VALLEY OF FRENZY.

THE remainder of the day Gillian spent interviewing such witnesses as were available. He was surprised and disconcerted to find that Captain Yanglat was, himself, the star witness. He had known Ezra Meeker. He had watched the enmity between the two men develop. He had witnessed the "soul transference ceremony," and he had been standing less than twenty feet away when Richard Fowler whipped out his pistol and emptied it into Ezra Meeker.

Gillian questioned him and cross-questioned him. And through him he questioned natives who had witnessed other features of the strange case.

It began to appear to Gillian as if the case was sewn up tight. With the captain of the Sultan's bodyguard as the "State's" witness, how could justice possibly be dispensed?

Late that afternoon he dropped in on Fowler again. The young man's faith in the transference of souls, through a weird *nat* ceremony, remained unshaken. Yes; he had talked it over during the early afternoon with Janet. She believed in it, too.

"Good God!" gasped the lawyer. "Well, look here, Richard; can you produce any witnesses aside from Captain Yanglat?"

"The natives who witnessed the ceremony and the murder have mostly drifted away," said Richard. "They were terrified."

"Captain Yanglat tells me that he saw it all—the hatred between you and Meeker, the ceremony and the murder. Is that true?"

"Yes, sir. He was there."

"Do you realize that he will say just what the Sultan wishes him to say?"

"How can he do otherwise, Mr. Hazeltine?"

Gillian took a deep breath. "Richard, I am going to do my damnedest to pull you out of this. It makes my blood boil. I would like to take that Sultan's neck in my two hands and—go like this. As far as the trial is concerned, we haven't a lie or a trick to take into that court room. Unarmed and empty-handed, we're going in there."

"I am not afraid."

Gillian smiled wanly. "I like that spirit, young man. Sleep to-night if you can. I'll see you in the morning."

Outside the jail, he encountered Janet Thorne. She was on the verge of hysterics.

"Mr. Hazeltine, have you found any way to help him? Is there a possible chance of freeing him?"

"My dear," said Gillian, and he awkwardly patted her shoulder, "there is always a chance. The most amazing things sometimes happen in court rooms. Why! I have gone into court

absolutely unprepared—and at the end of the trial I have seen my client walk out, a free man, hailed as a hero!"

"You're a peach!" said the girl.

Gillian returned to the palace and to the suite which had been set aside for him—a luxurious bedroom with its own garden terrace, a bathroom of lapis lazuli, a reception room, a drawing-room, and a study lined with books. They were in all languages, from Sanskrit to the Scandinavian.

He dined alone on his terrace and at half past eight was summoned by the Sultan. He was escorted through a maze of rooms and corridors to a compound adjoining the west wing of the palace. Darkness had fallen. The moon had not yet risen. Palm trees were silhouetted airily against stars so bright that they seemed to drip silver. The compound was aglare with the orange light of torches.

Richly caparisoned elephants, a small army of them, tramped about in the compound. The Sultan was no longer in the attire of an American real estate agent, but in the full regalia of his office. He wore a white turban on which glittered a great star sapphire ringed with diamonds; a silk robe of white, fringed at the sleeves and hem with angora wool dyed emerald-green. A chain of gold links encircled his lean waist. And from it dangled a scabbard of gold above which twinkled a sword hilt studded with gems.

Captain Yanglat was not in evidence.

ELEPHANTS all about the compound were kneeling. The Sultan conducted Gillian to the largest. Two half-naked brown men helped the Sultan up, then Gillian. They faced each other on the largest elephant Gillian had ever seen. Over them was a canopy of cloth-of-gold.

Orders were shouted. The torch-bearers ran ahead, and the procession of elephants began to move, in single file, with the Sultan's huge pachyderm leading.

The Sultan lighted a perfumed cigarette and began to talk. The elephants, urged on by their *mahouts,* paced swiftly along a wide lane through the jungle. The Sultan's voice was like a chant; and it was meaningless to Gillian.

Presently the elephants began to climb. It was a long, steep hill. The great beasts were panting and puffing long before the top was reached. Suddenly the top was reached, and Gillian gasped with amazement.

Below him was a bowl, a valley, of fire—the Valley of the Dead. Like a veil that had no beginning and no end, the waxen smoke from myriads of candles, lamps and torches ascended through the windless sky until sky and earth were welded.

The hillsides rippled with light and the river was a coiling, sluggish, fiery serpent, gliding goldenly down its bed.

Robes had been spread on the hilltop. The Sultan threw himself down on a robe, cushioned his chin in his palms and stared down the hill. Some portions of his explanation were understandable.

"To-night is a jubilee night all along the river. It is the most propitious phase of the moon in the entire year. Villages all along the stream are setting adrift to-night tiny rafts each supporting some sort of little flame, thousands from a single village, until the river from Boalo to Saigon is a blazing path of fealty to Shin-Upago, the river god who dwells in the mud at the bottom.

"You see those dark masses on this side of the river? Those are my subjects, Mr. Hazeltine. They have gath-

ered to watch the dance. Once every year from among the unmarried girls, the virgins, of Senang, a bride for the king of the *nats* is selected by means of a competitive dance. The girl who dances longest automatically becomes Min Magayi's bride. The bride of the *nat*-king is highly honored."

"Does she see this *nat*-king?"

"Never! To be a bride of Min Magayi is the greatest honor that can fall to a Senangese girl. It makes her eminently desirable in the eyes of all the young men of her village. The girls work themselves into a state of frenzy by eating *leh-pet*, or pickled tea. A hog, if permitted near the compound, would cause the bride candidates to swoon in numbers, for Min Magayi was, in one of his incarnations, a Mohammedan."

Weird, savage music began drifting up with the candle and torch smoke to where Gillian and the Sultan lay. The lawyer shivered. The hair on his nape seemed to rise. With fascinated eyes, Gillian watched the square area below them where the dance would begin.

HE saw a girl whirl out into the compound. From head to waist she was naked. From her hips hung a flimsy *sarong*. One of the musicians freed a shriek from a varnished gourd. The girl leaped into the air, spinning. Another girl whirled into the compound, the golden light of torches falling in gleams and leaping coils on her breasts, her sides, her arms, her sinuous back.

The square of pounded dirt came suddenly alive with madly whirling girls—little saffron-faced ghosts in *sarongs* of orange and crimson, purple and yellow, blue and green—flinging themselves about, swaying, hopping from foot to foot, gliding without meaning, never touching—a blurred, heaving mass of colors, as if a rainbow had collapsed and lay in writhing folds.

There would be no rest for the bride candidates of Min Magayi.

A girl who swooned from over-excitement—or over-indulgence in pickled tea—might rise and dance again, said the Sultan, but her swooning was not a propitious sign; it was symbolic of some *nat's* displeasure. They would dance until dawn, those who did not succumb to fatigue and the poisons of excitement and *leh-pet* dropping one by one until one alone remained—the bride of the *nat*-king.

From time to time the spirit of some *nat* entered the body of one of the madly dancing maidens. She would scream, and a place would be made for her to dance a little more wildly, a little more madly than the others.

Gillian, watching the swift dance, stirred restlessly. The moon rose—a moon of yellow gold, perfectly round—the full mango moon. A bird shrilly whistled—the mango bird. Or was this coincidence a little too well-timed?

The criminal lawyer, inured though he was to emotions, was aware of the beginnings in him of emotions that he had never before experienced. It was as if some spicy drug had been introduced into his veins. And it was not mere sensuousness, although the sight of those abandoned girls would have aroused any man to sensuousness. It was more a feeling that he was somehow a part of all this. An uncomfortable awareness of *something* was stealing over his mind.

With a detached, cold part of his mind alert and watching, he gave the rest of himself to this queer new emotion. It was as though he were him-

self watching for the girl who would become, actually, the spirit bride of the king of the *nat* hell-heaven. It required a great effort to put the thought out of his mind as absurd.

Was it so absurd? As the dance went on, as the candle and torch smoke flooded up to him, as the brutal music of the *patma* and the *ya-gwin* beat upon his senses, he was not so sure. Behind so much fervor there must be an actuality.

He began to think about Richard Fowler. Was Richard Fowler a little unbalanced? Doubtless the young American had witnessed such a dance as this, and the same feeling had stolen over him that was now stealing over the lawyer.

But the transference of souls? Nonsense!

ONE of the girls had fallen. She leaped up again and, for a long moment, stood with arms upstretched toward the hilltop. Her arms were golden arrows. Her body, a rounded golden shaft. She wore a grass-green *sarong*.

Fear flickered at the very heart of Gillian's brain. It was as if the girl were summoning him. To what? Merely sin? In her slim, taut golden body was the lure of jungle and exotic experience. It was as if, above the discord of the instruments, her soul was inviting him.

His soul, indeed! His common sense reasserted itself.

"It gets you!" Gillian said to himself. "Why! This damned thing, this jungle spirit, would get anybody." And it struck him as a sharp suspicion that the Sultan had brought him here, very cleverly, for a purpose. To saturate him with devil-lore! To befuddle him with the spirit of *nat* fanatics! To take the keen edge off his brain for tomorrow!

And when he looked again, the golden girl was only a little Tonkinese maiden, agonized by pickled tea and superstitious terror, begging any god to take pity on her.

It was as if a shadow had fallen across Gillian's guilty longings for utterly new, utterly exotic experiences.

And something pinched his ankle.

Gillian, startled, looked around. A brown-skinned stranger in a black *sarong* was standing, looking down at him with folded arms, eyes small red pools of fire reflecting the glare in the Valley of the Dead.

He beckoned with his head, and laid a precautionary finger to his betel-stained lips.

Gillian cautiously crawled backward. He knew that the Sultan was not aware of his going. The Sultan was lost, enraptured, in the scene below.

Without a word the man walked slowly away. He led Gillian to a thicket of areca palms; turned and strode silently off.

A deep voice said: "I am here, Mr. Hazeltine."

The tallest man Gillian had ever seen stepped into a shaft of moonlight.

In the moonlight the vermilion paste with which Prince Kouang's face was smeared looked purple. The blue areas under his eyes were black. The whites of his eyes shimmered like silver.

Gillian gasped: "I did not know that you spoke English."

And the strange prince-priest said: "Nor does my brother. I have called you away to bargain with you. We are two intelligent men. It is time that we reached an understanding. If you trust me, if you go my way and not his way, you will be saved. Do you

suppose that my brother brought you to Senang because he was in the least interested in the fate of a foolish love-sick young man?"

Gillian recalled what Professor Thorne had said that morning; the implication that the Sultan was concealing his real motive. Gillian said nothing. He waited.

"He brought you to Senang to exchange your soul for his own!"

Gillian did not laugh. That morning he would have laughed. Now he did not even smile.

"AS you are a shrewd man," Prince Kouang went on, "you will doubtless keep your own counsel. I am making no overtures of friendship. I have no feeling whatever for you. I do not hate you. I do not like you. I wish merely to strike a bargain with you. The time will come when you will require my help."

Gillian said: "What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing. Only call for my help when you require it. As this trial progresses, I know how your mind will work. And it will suddenly realize a necessity for my help. When that time comes, you may trust me implicitly."

"How will I need you?"

"I am not prepared to say. I say only, repose implicit trust in me when the time comes. Your mind will suddenly be confronted by a problem. Only one man can solve that problem for you. I am that man. I will help. You must not question me or doubt me. You must not hesitate to call on me."

"But what is the bargain?"

"That is the bargain. When the time comes, call on me and I will help. I ask only that. Do not hesitate. In return for asking for my help, for *insisting* on my help, I will grant any reasonable demand that you wish to make now.

"You have undertaken to defend Richard Fowler against a charge of murder. With your genius and my help, you can succeed. If you do succeed, I will guarantee that Miss Thorne, her father, Richard Fowler, and yourself, shall reach Saigon safely, intact."

"What you are proposing," Gillian guessed, "is only a part of some large plan that does not concern me. Is that the case?"

Prince Kouang slowly nodded his head. His eyes, in their black sockets, glittered.

"It will pay you well," he said, "to betray this conversation to no one. Do we bargain?"

"We bargain," Gillian said.

The chief priest of Senang without another word turned and walked slowly away.

Gillian returned to the robes where the Sultan was lying. The eyes of Chaddore Wang Chot Shoddor were still glued upon the scene in the Valley of the Dead.

Gillian, stretching out beside him, looked down at the madly dancing girls. It struck him suddenly that he did not like Oriental methods. There were too many wheels within wheels. How could he hope to cope with men like Prince Kouang and the Sultan and Mr. Chong, whose minds were trained to travel sinister dark alleys? This jungle made men dangerous, sly, treacherous and horribly cunning.

His uneasiness grew. It was as though the very spirit of the jungle were hovering over him, vulture-like, preparing to swoop down and strike.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

The camp called him Jonah

Jonah and the Mail

Woods boss Frisch and young axman Tige Bowen had fought over a dog, the camp pest—a quarrel that was to have strange consequences during the national tree-felling contests in those Arkansas woods

By WALTER CLARE MARTIN

I STEPPED to the door of my office tent and whistled for the Ozark Kid, the cook's helper. His freckled face was scratched up, his hair dangling wet spider webs.

"Where's the war, Kid?" I joshed him.

"I had to crawl the brier patch acrost the crick, boss—to fotch the yaller houn' for the cook. That feller Frisch, he tin-canned 'im."

I spied the pup bellying along behind the Kid. His sore tail had been dressed in a faded bandanna which drooped like a sick butterfly. The cook had another name for his hound, but the rest of the camp had agreed on Jonah.

"A dirty trick, for a man!" the Ozark Kid flared.

"Not so nice; but the pup is a pestilence. He just stole some of Mr. Frisch's letters and hid them, nobody knows where. If it weren't for the cook, that Jonah dog would be hanged to a gin pole. Well, Kid, now run and find Tige Bowen and Frisch for me. I want them."

He scuttled out, brave and barefoot, through the rattling March leaves, that nuisance of a pup behind him.

Frisch showed up first, my strapping, swart woods boss and general superintendent. He was a Magyar who had migrated young. Tige Bowen followed, his double-bitted ax in hand. An upstanding lad that I had long had my eye on.

"Tige," I said, "I've pensioned old man Perot. You get his job as assistant to Frisch. Your wages are doubled. Okay?"

"I'm sorry," said Tige bluntly. "I don't want it."

I'm used to surprises, but that buckled my truck. I waited; he did not explain.

"Any reason?" I urged him.

"No reason." He was meeting Frisch eye to eye.

"Okay with me. Get to work, then." I was hotter than pine knots. I'd been grooming Tige two years for this job. He walked out, head up.

"What's choked up his kerf?" I quizzed Frisch.

"You can search me," the woods boss shrugged. "College guys are that way."

"Well, the woods are full of good timber. I'll find some one. Start the stringer road to-day, using black oak. I want to clear it off the main road." He lingered, so I inquired: "Understand?"

"Oh, sure. Now about that job—old Perot's. I know a good man."

"No; we'll let it ride," I decided. "I want to roll that lad over in private."

Frisch shouldered into the forest, his black felt aslant. I could see I had rossed his feelings. I hated that, but no help for it. He was probably itching to appoint one of his bohunks.

Disgusted aplenty with young Tige Bowen, I tried to puzzle out his crazy conduct.

It distressed me extremely, coming on top of a big pile of hard luck. I cursed the hour I quit the Douglas fir country. I had been getting by, after a fashion, even if freight rates had jumped the moon.

TRUTH was, I had got into a miserable jam now, coming to Arkansas. The cause of the jam was Jensen, an old schoolmate of mine. He was a buyer for the South Gulf Railway, the road which planned to lay a new track from K. C. to Orleans.

"Can I have the contract for ties?" I asked Jensen.

"Sure," he gestured; "why not? Just move to the white oak country. Lease plenty of timber. I'll make everything jake."

So I leased everything running wild north of the Arkansas River. I dug deep in my jeans for new band-saws to supplement my own buzz. As this was furniture country, I shipped in edgers, planers, veneers, and a flock of finishing tools to prepare for furniture contracts I hadn't got yet. Bought new engines, new cables, new teams. If I smashed, they needn't look for the pieces.

"All set," I wired Jensen.

He showed up, hot and bothered like a wet setting hen. His president, Keeney, had pulled him up short. Keeney, it appeared, favored the Kranz Mill in Missouri. Kranz had made ties for years. Kranz was quoted in trade journals; had prestige, publicity. They couldn't beat Kranz.

"Write stuff for the journals," Jensen urged me. "Take photos to send to the press. Get yourself advertised. I could put it over like gumdrops if your camp were known in these parts."

"When I win the National this year," I bragged, "even the Emir of Afghanistan will know it."

"Gosh, yes!" He stared at me. "But you've never done that."

"I've never had to, before."

He jigged back to K. C., full of battle. Soon he wired me:

> KEENEY LIKES A SPORTING PROPOSITION STOP AGREES YOU GET CONTRACT BY WINNING NATIONAL AX CONTEST STOP OTHERWISE KRANZ
>
> JEN

That gave me a month or two still to live.

This National Ax contest was fa-

thered by the hardware industry, though lumber gave half the prize money. One thousand to the winning axman; one thousand to the maker of the winning ax; one thousand to the winning camp, for a blow-out.

The finish fight would be held in the Arkansas hills, these being central. I had volunteered some fine trees for the slaughter.

Winning the National title depended upon three factors: good luck, good men, good axes. Since the tie timber to be felled beyond the creek—if I won—could be easier ax-hewn than logged to the saw, I resolved to standardize. I would buy the best axes money could buy, and train all the men on them for the title.

I whistled up the Kid again.

"Get that salesman, name of Peck. Also that girl, Miss Ferry." The girl was another salesman's sister. Her brother and this Jared Peck were rivals from competing concerns. Ferry had tried to rescue that confounded Jonah dog from a buzz-saw carriage, and got himself gigged. Of course the hound wasn't hurt; he wouldn't be. Ferry went to a hospital to get himself patched, and his sister galloped twenty miles from Fort Smith to pinch-hit and battle Peck for my business.

The Kid bolted off under one gallus. I recalled something suddenly and whistled him back.

"What's the sour wood, old-timer, between Tige and Frisch?"

"It just kinda growed, boss, I reckon, till they fit to-day over the yaller houn' pup."

"Damn the pup! He's a Jonah for fair. What happened this time?"

"Well, when Frisch tin-canned him, the cook went hog wild, and Frisch booted him in the pants. Tige took the cook's part. Tige an' Frisch was just warmin' up handsome when I informed 'em you wanted 'em both."

"Good boy. Now fetch Peck and Miss Ferry."

HE fetched 'em for me.

"Take a stump, folks," I invited the pair, cleaning some devil-legs out. "I've called you in to fight this hardware contract through. We'll settle it here and now. My first lot will be axes and brush knives for the clearing job this side of the creek. The axes have got to be the best money can buy. I'm out to win the National this season. Now throw the facts at me—who makes the best ax?"

Peck upped from his chunk, thumbing his folio rapidly. "That's easy," he pronounced. "It's generally acknowledged our Casehard line is the best in America."

"Who acknowledged it?" the girl asked gently.

"Why, everybody. Look here at our customers." He wheeled toward me with large gestures. "Our steels are tempered at higher heat. It makes our blade harder than hers."

"And more brittle!" she challenged. "We use one and two-tenths per cent carbon. Your firm uses eight-tenths. Your axes nick where ours deflect from knots. We temper down slowly from cherry heat." She appealed to me: "I'd like to break one of Mr. Peck's axes and one of ours, to prove the grain at the fracture."

"I'd like to make a tensile test!" shouted Peck.

"Whoa, here!" I stopped them. "This technical stuff gets into my eyes. I can't see the log for the sawdust. I want to know what these axes will do to white oak and post oak. Do you have any felling reports?"

"Anybody can get them." Peck

made small beer of it. "But your own timber boss tested my ax yesterday and the one Mr. Ferry left here. Why not take his opinion?"

"Good idea. Frisch knows tools." I whistled up the Kid, who got Frisch, slicked up a new leather jacket. I put it right up to him:

"Which ax cuts better, Mr. Frisch—Peck's or Ferry's?"

He appeared to be embarrassed.

"Speak right up. We're all friends," I snapped. The competitors nodded. My superintendent cleared his windpipe.

"Peck's ax is the best." He spoke positively. "I've tried both."

The girl gulped. Her cool shell cracked, showing the child underneath. After all, she was just a year out of college. A tear boiled to her cheek, though she fought it. She blinked at me. I couldn't help it; I was sorry.

"It's all in the game," I consoled.

"Yes, it's all in the game. But this deal meant promotion to Fred. And our axes *are* better! I know it! I can prove it!" She pinned Frisch with her eyes. "Are you sure they were tested fairly?"

Frisch stiffened; replied coldly: "As fair as I know how, miss."

I handed a memo to Peck.

"You win, Peck. Send this list right away. If I like the tools and your service and all, the rest of the order will come."

"That's splendid, sir!" He pumped my arm. With a fat grin he approached Miss Ferry, hand stuck out. "No hard feelings, I hope?"

She bucked up like a good sport.

"I congratulate you," she said. Peck beamed largely, his thumb in his vest.

"Why, it's no disgrace to lose to the Casehard ax. We won the National once."

"You won't win it this year," she flashed. He laughed as one would at a child, and she came to me. "I'd like to wander about your camp. If I learn more, maybe I can sell my tools better."

"Help yourself." I waved *carte blanche*. "Stay a week, if you want to. Try not to get lost."

"I'll show you around," proffered Frisch.

"No, thanks—not this time." She twinkled off through broken shadows of shellbarks, the sunbeams stabbing at her as she fled through the camp. The three of us stared after.

"Cute kid!" aired Peck tolerantly.

"You'll believe she's cute," I warned him thoughtfully, "before she is through with your crowd."

"That's a good laugh!" He popped fist in palm genially. "So she's winning the National, is she? Poor kid, she's got a cry comin'." He breezed through the usual cigar and salute, quitting the hills in a buckboard hired from the Kid's old man. Frisch went back to his roading. I took a stroll with our timber cruiser, guessing the number of ties to the hill—in case I ever had a chance to do anything about it except make a report in bankruptcy.

MISS FERRY, after scouting around half a day, chanced to discover Tige Bowen on the logging road, when she was on her way to the circular saw.

Tige was a feller and limber. I had also cut his eye teeth on jobs around the big mill, dressing him for old Perot's job. We used axes here in these hardwoods. On the coast falling saws were more common.

Tige was eating up a six-splitter in the path of the mules. The girl watched like a boy in a sideshow. Men and

teams with stump chains and shovels were cussing and clanging up and down the roadway, so Tige did not notice her.

A minute, maybe, she watched him laying the licks on; chips jumped out like scared tree-frogs. Tige was not large, but beautifully rigged. Speed rippled all over him. A charged, intense kind of fellow. He had been with me two years. Another season, I figured, and he'd be able to cut with Rue, our best axman.

Suddenly Miss Ferry faced about, scrambling down the long slope through the timber until she reached the only shack we had up—a commissary and shelter for tools. The cook's kitchen was under one end.

The old chef was grunting under a slab bench, clutching for his irrepressible pup. Jonah had run away with the cook's wallet. A slush cook gouged potatoes and giggled. The girl helped corral the hound, and they choked the money out of him. While the cook lectured the pup, the girl panted:

"Have my axes come out from Fort Smith?"

They had come. The cook ripped the crate open, and she toted an ax up to Tige. He was whipping a stubborn elm at the roadside.

"Here!" she cried eagerly. "Try this one!" He looked back, startled. A young woman he had never seen stood behind him, flushed and sparkling, catching her breath, extending a bright ax, blade foremost.

"All right," he assented, sinking his own bit in a stump. A gentleman asks no questions.

She gazed, excited, while he hewed the elm down. Every lick seemed to chug in her heart. While the crash was still echoing through the woods she asked him:

"Is that ax as good as the Casehard?"

"Oh, I don't know. Axes are like folks—they have hidden tricks. It takes a long time to learn them. I used a Casehard last winter. It cuts deep, but it nicks on the hard stuff. It couldn't take that sour knot the way this ax did—that's my opinion, I mean."

"Mr. Frisch doesn't think so. I am told he knows tools."

"He knows axes, all right; especially how to grind them." His tone was ironical.

"You mean you don't trust him?"

"No, I don't. But it isn't cricket to bite your boss in the back, so let's drop it."

She rose to that. "I don't either!" she cried. "I am sure his ax test wasn't fair!"

"Ax test?" His professional pride was baited.

By sundown his ear was packed with her story. It worked his brain into a hot box, because he could do nothing about it. He left her in her tent, where the cook had supper waiting—with extras—and strolled to the chuck. The rest of us were dining from stumps, like brownies.

TIGE'S buddies remarked that he ate picky. Half filled, he slung his pan and cup to a chore boy, making a straight cut for my tent.

"I've been using the King-Carbon double-bit, sir. I like it better than Casehard. Don't you think we should make extensive tests before ordering—because of the National? Rue ranked for the finals last year."

"Rue uses a special British ax. I wouldn't ask him to change. As for the Casehards, they're already ordered."

"In my opinion it's a mistake," he told me.

"In my opinion," I came back, "your opinion would be worth more if it came from Mr. Frisch's assistant. The job is still open—if you've blown all the foam out of your boiler."

"I'm sorry, sir." He flushed and walked out stubbornly.

From that moment he avoided every one but Miss Ferry. Sometimes he avoided even her. It blistered his metal to confront an injustice, having no means to combat it. Youth is ever Quixotic. Some take it out on windmills, some with hot blasts in print. Tige Bowen took it out upon trees. He chopped as if he were berserk, clearing the ridge for the log road. The lean, leisurely Ozark coon hunters who whacked the mules and draft oxen used to comment facetiously:

"Young feller, yan hackberry was nussin' turkey cocks on its seed when my grandpap's dress suit was a didy. A minute more 'r less after all these years cain't knock no horns off the devil. Take it slow and live longer, sonny."

Tige would force a grin at these sallies, trying hard to be polite. Something—several things—had come over him. One was Fred Ferry's sister. She soon became "Zona" to him. Zona Ferry looped around his young life like a fan belt, driving his heart at high speed.

Soon the pair began murmuring of the National contest. Would King-Carbon rank above Casehard? Did Tige have a chance for the finals? When this topic caught fire their hopes flared up wildly.

"You can win!" She infused him with her enthusiasm. "You can! You can!" He had never had the gall to claim that.

Zona left. Her last words—"I'll come back if you place for the finals"—seemed to bite him like boneset. He flew into the business of felling and swamping as if he were blocking an invading army.

When the shipment of Casehards muled out from Fort Smith, Frisch called in all tools for inspection. An ax with the faintest fault or flaw was hustled into storage; new Casehards issued instead. Rue's British ax was in fettle, so Frisch allowed him to keep it, perhaps because of his tall reputation.

Frisch stored Tige's King-Carbon. He issued a Casehard six ounces lighter. Tige went to the bat with him.

"Sorry, old man," answered Frisch, "boss's orders. He's aimin' to standardize."

"Then give me my regular weight," Tige demanded.

"Can't spot one right off. I'll sort through the lot till I find one. Just keep your shirt on till I do."

Silent, Tige left him, and angry. He encountered the cook and unloaded on him. The cook had a key to the tool room. That night one of Zona's King-Carbon axes stealthily weaseled under the hem of Tige's tent. He cached it near his post and used it with satanic joy whenever Frisch was out of sight. Other choppers shared the joke, grinning greatly; but a Hungarian road monkey spilled it to Frisch, and the woods boss seized the ax. They had words. Frisch called him disloyal. Tige called that a lie. A fight started.

Our clever Frenchman, Rue, thrust a hornbeam between them.

"Save the beeg punch for the Nationale!" he reminded Tige. "After that, go fight the boots off."

All the men nodded at that. So

Frisch warned Tige and moved on—taking the King-Carbon.

AFTER supper Tige marched up to me with a request that I sell him two King-Carbons.

"They're not mine," I explained. "But Miss Ferry left them here without instructions. If you like that brand, help yourself. I'm standardizing on Casehards to call in a load of bum metal; that's all."

"Mr. Frisch forbids the use of King-Carbons."

"That's different. I didn't mean to be military, but I won't interfere with him in small matters."

"Then give me an order for two King-Carbons. I'll save one for the try-outs; I'll only use the other outside working hours. He can't kick on that."

"Nope, he couldn't. But I can't write such an order slapping Frisch in the face. Besides, the axes aren't mine. You can go ahead and get permission from Miss Ferry."

"That ought to be easy," he said.

It was easy. A telegram gave him the lot. Tige got the tools out and hid them; then showed Frisch the order.

"You stay out of that tool room!" Frisch clenched a fist. "I ought to give you a punch in the nose. When the contest is over, I will."

"That makes two punches," said Tige.

Thus commenced the armed truce. Tige worked with fierce quiet enthusiasm, training on Zona's ax before breakfast, at noon, and late into twilight; working with the standard Casehards during the day. He studied his stroke like a golfer. Stumps began to emerge from his ax like marble-topped tables. Men actually compared him with Rue.

On the eve of the try-outs a dreadful thing happened: Rue's pet English ax disappeared. He had pegged it into a black oak log on the ridge, going half down the hillside to a little spring for a drink. The ax vanished, with no forwarding address. Rue was wretched, hurt, bitter. He threw his clenched fists above his head muttering, "Damn thees polecat, if ever I catch heem!"

Frisch gave him his choice of the Casehards. "Too bad about your old pal," he sympathized, "but you'll like this one when you get used to the hang of it."

"Bah!" snorted Rue. "My pal ax, she was not just ax. She was one t'oroughbred."

The try-outs for our camp began next day. Rue, Fox, Tige and Steele rose out of the chips victorious, ranking in that order.

Under the rules each State must choose four champions to fight the thing out, in forests in four States. To represent Arkansas we had to beat the Yellow Pine men south of the river. Rue went down and ate them like fried frog legs. They weren't used to the style of the Douglas.

Tige beat a tough hombre from Kansas. Fox stole the goose from a Cherokee champ in Oklahoma; but Steele was chopped down in Missouri, by a giant working for my chief rival, Kranz. This beef crossed our line and I set Rue against him. I was taking no chances with Kranz.

Rue buried him under the white oaks, among the liverworts and fragrant skunk cabbage.

Fort Smith papers featured the battle. I mailed a marked copy to Jensen, but he wrote back that Keeney was adamant. We had to win title and publicity. So we entered the stiff semi-finals.

From the welter of chips reared Arkansas, Colorado, Michigan, Idaho, Wisconsin, Maine. Fox lost his tough pelt in this mêlée; Tige and Rue remained undefeated. We now were pitched against Idaho. Again I sent Rue out, and again he brought in a scalp, though his Casehard sprung a bad nick. Wisconsin hewed down Colorado. Michigan was crushed under Maine.

NOW it stood Maine versus Wisconsin, with Rue versus the winner. That brought the ax world to Arkansas, to be the guest of my camp.

Old Jensen was there with his nervous president, Keeney. Lumber and steel men from everywhere, including London and Sheffield. Fallers, buckers, scalers, cruisers, snipers, raftsmen, sky-hookers, ground moles—all thirsting to be in at the kill. And several big furniture makers from whom I hoped to get trade.

We added two hundred tents to our camp, erecting a mammoth mess table. The Ozark Kid rounded up twenty-three barefoot hill-billies to hook redhorse from the creeks. The women aproned up bushels of April greens: poke, dock, dandelion, lamb's quarter. Cook paid them four pennies a pound.

The first Friday in April was to be the big day. By Wednesday nobody could work. The very trees rustled excitement. Teams browsed while men mouthed and wagered. Logs snaked, belts slipped, saw rims heated, boilers foamed over, ax blades roosted in idle stumps while the lumberjacks fought with tongues and fists, and with their hard-earned money.

I stood on my chair-chunk, Wednesday at table, declaring a two-day vacation. A roar went round like news of the Armistice. I drafted a posse of ten ironheads from among my old-timers to act as police and keep order.

Rue gave me the highball to get me alone. He asked about the rules of the contest.

"Same as last year," I assured him. "No count of licks and no stopwatch. The first tree that falls, wins. If you nick one edge, turn the other. If that breaks—call the hearse."

"And the sprain—the cut—the beeg hurt?"

"If you get hurt while chopping, the referee whistles. Time out. We run in a substitute—Tige, of course. If he doesn't use your same ax, his opponent also can demand a fresh blade; and a rest, if he wants it. But don't cut your head off, old-timer."

"Not me. I got some use for thees bean." He sauntered away, thinking hard.

Four white oaks, magnificent fellows, had been dedicated to the event. They stood in our valley, between the tents and the creek, coral-fingered and bursting with beauty. The cruisers guessed them a hundred feet tall, scaling four feet through at eye level.

Gimlet samples were taken; no hollows revealed. As to hidden scars, knots or galleries—that was part of the gamble. It made the betting worth while. The contest was practical logging; efficiency raised to the *n*th power.

"Get your tree down," was all there was to it.

Our swampers cleared the arena, a great glade in a valley of hardwoods. Big stumps were souped out; small ones jerked like eye-teeth. The road gang graded the terrain up and away from the chosen white oaks. An outdoor Roman theater.

Friday forenoon, while a thousand hearts startled at every chip, Thor of Maine, with a Canadian ax, cut down

the flag of Wisconsin. The lumberjacks hoisted him into a young hickory tree, chopped it free, and paraded the frenzied glade, singing songs that turned some of the ladies pink. The referee rescued him to compel him to rest.

At three o'clock he met Rue.

IF the air of our camp was electric before, it now fairly trembled, like the lull ahead of a typhoon. Folks began to tear bark from the two white oaks, mad for souvenirs of the coming contest. We had to rope the trees off.

Inside the ropes gathered privileged souls: referees; substitutes; tool passers; prize holders; former champs; standard bearers. Everybody ranked well away from the direction of crash —swarming up slope, for the trees were gunned downward.

Thor took the toss. He chose the left tree. It scaled a bit bigger, but gave him better stance. Rue had sun on his ax, a bad bargain.

Our pennon was tied to the top of Thor's tree; the Maine banner flew from ours.

The referee whistled.

"Get ready . . .

"Get set . . .

"Go!" he thundered.

The passers hurled the tools twenty feet to the two axmen. A fair catch! The flying flash of blue steel was still in my eyes when I heard the first thud on the wood. Two thuds, not a clock-tick between them. How a muscle can leap under tension!

The crowd at first had no breath—no life, but loud hammering heartbeats. As the fallers warmed up, striking faster and faster, gasps and mutters broke from the mob, rising on tiptoe. They swelled to a bedlam of cheering.

Through the pale sap the axes ate, into the browning heartwood. They played on the trees like xylophones, one stroke timed after another.

"Perfect form!" I was nudging Jensen. "Beautiful, beautiful"—when I saw a spark fly from Rue's ax.

Rue winced. I felt sick. As the blade soared up he glanced from his mark and caught the coarse gleam of a nick. As the blade came down he reversed the bits to present a true edge to the tree.

Another spark; another nick. The other blade was dented. Now I knew we were hamstrung. He had hit a lime pocket. The larvæ of certain small wood beetles are wont to bore out narrow galleries which they line with excretions that harden like rock. Although the lime tunnels harm the trees little, they play hob with cold steel. Rue was now up against it. He must guess the tunnel's depth and decide: to slash through at the risk of a ruined ax, or to try to bite all around it.

I was bursting to yell at him: "Go round, go round!" but I choked the plea in my lungs. All coaching was sharply forbidden.

Rue did an amazing thing. He toed himself to his topmost strength and slammed at the cut like a madman. Flash, flash, flash, flash—every lick frightened fire from the pocket. I feared Rue would jerk all the tone from his arms; I was sure he had ruined his blade.

Ten strokes, and he was through it. You could tell by the sound. He flashed a glance toward the referee, who had his eyes focused on Thor.

With a glitter no vision could follow Rue's ax darted tree-ward, took the notch at a slant, chipped through and glanced downward, gashing a wound in Rue's foot. Free blood spurted over his bright new boot.

Rue tossed his ax to Tige quickly. "Time out," he called, kneeling to examine his wound.

The referee whistled. Time out.

THAT is how Tige Bowen got into the fight, with a new soap-honed King-Carbon.

The camp sawbones who patched Rue declared he was out.

"How dreadful!" women said, and "How pitiful!" "What damned rotten luck!" croaked the men.

I knew something they didn't—something about heroes. But in spite of Rue's daring sacrifice, I figured my goose was cooked. Tige hardly could hope to beat Thor. All bets were washed off and new wagers laid; five dollars to four upon Thor. Some one pulled at my shoulder—the aged, game little owner of the Maine outfit, daring me with a challenging grin:

"Five hundred to four on Thor."

I started to shake my head. The whistle trilled. The tail of my eye caught Tige moving away from the ropes where he had been talking to Zona Ferry.

"Tige!" she cried. He rushed back. As quick as a mink she kissed him. I saw the fierce color rise up in his cheek, his whole heart rising with it. An exotic sensation snaked through my brain, a picture of knights upon horseback.

"I'll cover that money," I said.

Again the thundering "Go!" Again the blue flight of the axes. Again a crowd quiet as huddled quail, watching Tige work into his stroke.

There was no ringing rhythm this time. Thor and Rue both chopped with a circular stroke, a smooth endless parabola, the swift tireless swing of the veteran. But Tige flung his ax out to the end of his reach, where it poised like a hawk, shooting straight at the tree in a fury. Every swing drew him full to his toes.

This manner of cutting soon wears a man out; but it drives the steel deep. Could the lad keep it up? His blade plunged into the flesh of the oak like St. George killing a dragon. I wondered how much of his marvelous stroke was due to the girl who had kissed him.

It came over us all, all at once, like a revelation, that the National was almost over and that Tige was ahead! His King-Carbon was winning! A cheer that shook acorns from black oaks went caroming over the Ozarks. I grinned at the man I had bet with. I cast about to spot Jensen, when the voice of the Ozark Kid squealed:

"Go 'way, you darn' fool, you'll git killed!"

The darn' fool was Jonah, the cook's dog and general camp pest. He had dug up that pack of letters he had stolen from Frisch, to trot them to a new hiding place. This fine crowd intrigued him, so he stopped to look on—slapdab in the path where Tige's tree would fall.

The Ozark Kid ducked under the ropes. A guard grabbed him. "You little fool!" he bawled, "you'll get smashed!"

Tige's tree was wagging like palsy. The guard shied a rock at the pup. The pup enjoyed that. He let go the letters and pounced on the stone; barked at it; bullied it; tossed it in the air gayly—then went back to his mail. He clawed at the pack in high humor, breaking the band. The pieces scattered, which delighted him doubly. He romped among them, pawing and barking.

Glued to that vanishing thin brown line, his whole soul in his ax, Tige had

not caught the commotion. Jonah's glad, excited yelps warned Tige. He gathered the meaning in one swift look; his hot face ebbed to ashes. A dog or a National title? His eyes raced to Thor whose industrious ax was paring Tige's lead to nothing.

Desperately Tige sized up his tree. A hundred feet up in the shining air it rocked like a wounded Titan. A sparrow might topple it now. Tige ran to the pup and snatched him up. A woman shrieked, "No! It will fall!"

Back Tige ran, spurting sweat, his wind almost gone, to dump the dog into the referee's arms. He leaped to his ax and laid a mad blow. One—two—three—four! Five! and that finished it. The wooden tower toppled. But it toppled too late. Thor's tree beat it down, by a leaf.

WHAT my emotions were then, I can't say. They were too mixed to unscramble. Dully I reckoned the lad had done right. But it cost me the South Gulf contract, the thing I had leased the earth for. Unless Providence intervened, I was sunk. Somehow, I remembered Frisch's letters. Business mail ought not to breeze round the forest for every stray salesman to read. I sent the Kid to find what he could. The mob surged against me, seeking its heroes. I had to get out of the way.

The Maine boys shouldered victorious Thor, but a wilder and bigger gang captured Tige, lording him all around the arena. As they passed me I saw he was crying; his face fairly blurry with tears. He had lost the National contest, and he knew what it meant to our camp.

Suddenly I realized I was proud of this boy, immeasurably proud, prouder than if he had won me all the contracts in the world. I sought out Keeney, the railroad man.

"Well," said I, "I lose the National and I lose your business, yet I'm happy over what happened."

"Don't be foolish," he grunted, "I saw the whole thing. Of course you don't lose our business. I'll tell you what you may lose, however; you may lose that young fellow, Bowen."

"Try and get him," I laughed.

"You dare me?"

"Go to it," I said; and he went. He got Tige alone and made him an offer, a railroad job at twice what I paid him. Tige rolled it over and cougared my trail until he caught me alone in my tent.

He looked tired. He stood humbly, hating to start.

"I lost the National for you," he got going, "and I admit it takes gall to ask favors under the circumstances. But Mr. Keeney offered me a job, at more money. I don't want it; I'd rather stay here. Yet I do need money—I have a good reason."

"I've seen the reason," I nodded. "She's a good one. Congratulations are in order."

He smiled sheepishly. "So I thought maybe—since you're hiring new gangs—you might send me out as head bucker."

"Of course!" I was answering, when the Kid galloped in. He thrust me some letters and parts of letters, some torn and all of them dirty.

"I fotched all I found, boss," he panted. "Mr. Frisch, he chased me, but I ducked him clean and come on. I knowed I should fotch 'em to you."

Frisch, rasping from exercise, peered into the tent.

"I see you got my letters. That's fine!" He shuffled near, extending his hand for them. As I moved to deliver

them to him I noted a Casehard letterhead.

"Whoa—what's this?" I looked closer, supposing it one of my letters. I had dealt direct with Peck's firm, not through Frisch. Addressed to no company, the missive began:

> Well, old man, here's the check I promised to mail you for putting that order across. That ought to clip the Ferry pullet's wings for a time. Ha, ha!
>
> If your man Rue that you told me about wins the National, and does it with a Casehard, there's a nice little bonus waiting for you.
>
> Yours for results,
>
> J. P.
>
> P. S.—Don't you think Rue might *lose* his old ax?

Frisch was not sure which letter I was reading, but like all guilty men he had fears. I laid it face down on the pile, my hand on top.

"I better get back to the men," Frisch said, businesslike. "Lots of blood up right now. Them Hungarians won't listen to nobody else. I can take my mail along now."

Leaning over my desk he laid hold of the letters. I flattened them fast, bearing down.

"Oh, no," I declared. "They're too dirty. Because a dog had them, perhaps. Now, Mr. Bowen"—I turned to Tige—"you wanted a job as head bucker. I don't need a head bucker, but I can offer you a job as superintendent—if you think you'd like to try that."

Tige gawked at me, then at Frisch. The ex-superintendent's face at that instant was nothing nice to look at.

"I don't get you, sir," Tige confessed. Frisch wasn't so puzzled.

I explained: "You and I, Tige, we like the King-Carbon, and we like the people who sell it. Mr. Frisch is sold, really sold, on the Casehard. He much prefers working for Peck."

"Suits me." Tige tried to act normal.

Frisch snapped something less pleasant, and hulked out. Some say that as he strode past the cook shack a pup peeked out and yapped at him—a yellow hound pup with a lump on his tail.

THE END.

A Concrete Ship Cafe

A CONCRETE ship four hundred feet long built during war time at Oakland, California, is now a pleasure resort at Santa Cruz, in the same State. Moored six hundred feet out in Monterey Bay, it has been connected with the shore by a pier, a big dance floor has been provided and a restaurant built on the level of the bridge. The ship, never used after its trial trip in 1918, was intended for an oil tanker. One of the tanks in its hold has been turned into an indoor swimming pool. Staterooms have been converted into hotel rooms. The original cost of the vessel was two million dollars. A sister ship is in use as a salmon canning plant off the coast of Alaska.

Leon Rowland.

The Chinese closed in triumphantly

The Nine Red Gods Decide

Loyal to the last breath were Jimmie Cordie and his five comrades, soldiers of fortune in the far places of the Orient; and never had that loyalty met such a fearful test as was set in the cruel passes of Chinese Turkestan

By W. WIRT

Author of "The Death Spell of Nong Chik," "The City of Japheth," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

ADVENTURERS of the far places of the earth are Jimmie Cordie and his fellow soldiers of fortune—big Irish "Red" Dolan; the Fighting Yid, Abraham Cohen, of Hester Street; the Boston Bean, alias Codfish or the Beaneater, John Cabot Winthrop of Back Bay, Boston; George Grigsby, tall dark Kentuckian; and big, drawling Arthur Putney, from Vermont.

Returning from helping Chieh-yu and his daughter Princess Chi Huan in Chinese Turkestan, they fall into a trap set by the War Lord Hsai of the city of Shun, who has sworn vengeance on them for slaying his War Brother. Decoyed to a ruined temple, Jimmie and Red disappear. The rest, with Shih-kai and his swordsmen of the dread secret order of the T'aip'ing, hurry to attack Hsai's city in the hope of rescuing their two comrades. They are trapped, with a failing supply of ammunition, in a hilltop shrine commanding Hsai's own palace.

Jimmie and Red manage to fight their way out of a subterranean trap, and with the aid of an English aviator, John Carewe, who is also being hunted by Hsai's men, they make their way outside. They find their comrades gone,

This story began in the Argosy for October 4.

and guess their destination; but Jimmie passes out, and Red and Carewe have to hole up, in the ruins, till he comes to.

CHAPTER IX.

PRINCESS OF MANCHU SWORDS.

THE PRINCESS CHI HUAN sat beside a little artificial lake in the gardens of the palace at Meng Wu. She should have been at peace with the world in such beautiful surroundings, but she most distinctly was not. As a matter of fact, she was in a very bad temper, this little Manchu princess, and nothing looked at all good to her.

Her maidens and the swordsmen of her bodyguard knew it and were keeping themselves in the background and as inconspicuous as possible. Not that the Princess Chi Huan was feared by them; she was loved by all the city and all of her father's troops, and they all knew that she loved them. But she was a pure-blooded Manchu and was very apt to act like one in the heat of temper.

Her retinue had in mind the old adage, "Out of sight, out of mind," and were acting on it as far as possible. They all knew what the matter was. Two days before, her father, Prince Chieh-yu, had left the city with a regiment or two of crack infantry to demonstrate to two or three lesser War Lords the unwisdom of siding with traitors like K'ung. Chi Huan had wanted to go along, dearly loving anything that even smacked of a fight; but her father had decided that for the moment she had seen enough fighting in the siege of the city. Left at home, she had instantly developed this wrathful attitude.

An old palace officer came up to within ten feet of her and bowed very low. As he approached, he saw the gleam in the midnight black eyes and knew that the little princess's feathers were ruffled. He made the bow extra low.

"O Princess whose smile lights up the world, a youth has come to the palace who craves admission and audience with the Princess Chi Huan."

"A youth who wishes audience with me? Am I to be bothered with the requests of youths? No; refuse him both admission and audience. Furthermore, instruct him sharply as to the proper channels of bringing any matter to my attention; and also— Who is this youth, Ta Ch'ing?"

"His name is Chung, resplendent one. He was in the second class at the school of swordsmen. He is the youth you picked out to go with the Lords with the fast-talking guns."

"Chung! Here in Meng Wu?" The Princess Chi Huan rose swiftly to her little feet. "Bring him to me instantly, Ta Ch'ing. No, I will waive the ceremonious bows. Go quickly."

Five minutes later the boy whom Jimmie Cordie had noticed in his column on the way to the temple stood in front of her. Both he and his clothes looked as if they had been through a hard route. They had indeed, for Chung had started out from where he stood on a bee line for Meng Wu, after the disappearance of Jimmie Cordie. He had come straight to the palace.

"Speak," commanded Chi Huan curtly.

"The Lord with the Flaming Hair and the Black-eyed Smiling One have disappeared," the boy began promptly. "The other Lords killed one who led them into a trap and one other who had helped the traitor. Then the other Lords left for Shun, the city of one

named Hsai, to rescue the two Lords who—"

"Start at the beginning and tell me. Speak quickly and do not omit anything. Start from the time the junk sailed."

The boy obeyed, and while of course he had not understood everything, especially the conversation in English, he had a pretty fair version of what had happened. The lovely face of the little princess became set and the black eyes cold as she listened.

At the finish of the boy's story the Princess Chi Huan said: "You will report back to the school of swords. The matter of reward for your services I will take up later. You have my permission to go."

The boy Chung would have given anything he possessed and quite a few years of his life to have asked the Princess Chi Huan to include him in any plans of rescue, but he had better judgment. One does not ask Manchu War Lords or their princesses to change an order; so Chung bowed and retired.

THE PRINCESS CHI HUAN, followed by her maidens and bodyguard, started for the palace. At the entrance she dismissed them with a smile and a friendly wave of her hand. Now that there was something to do, her wrath had fled. Her father's War Brother, Yang, was in full command of the city and the territory it protected, and the princess was going to see him, no matter what he might be doing.

She found him studying some jade that was laid out on an inlaid table. Hearing her light footsteps, he looked up, and his grim, scarred old face became less harsh as he smiled. He rose and bowed.

"You honor me, little flower, by coming to see me. Deign to accept this chair until I may have one brought more suitable for your comfort."

The Princess Chi Huan crossed her hands on her firm young breasts and bowed. "My honorable father would not be pleased to see me sitting down while his War Brother the Lord Yang stands, even if I would so far forget what has been taught me. I ask you to resume your seat, O Lord Yang."

Yang smiled and clapped his hands together once. A piece of tapestry was drawn back on the side of the room and an officer saluted.

"A chair for the Princess Chi Huan," Yang ordered, and as the tapestry dropped, he continued to Chi Huan: "The jades you see, beautiful one, are of the Kin dynasty. This morning they were brought to me. See," he traced an intricate design with delicate touch. "This always you will see in jade of the Kin . . . But you have something to tell me, peerless one?"

A chair was brought and placed beside the princess, but she did not sit down, and Yang also remained standing back of the table.

"Yes, O Lord Yang, who takes the place of my honorable father. It is this. The men who came here and helped him—and you—to defend this city, have been trapped by a cur named Hsai."

"Hsai? He was K'ung's War Brother. May I ask you to be seated, little flower? My insignificant wounds are a trifle painful."

Chi Huan sat down promptly, and as she did, Yang resumed his seat.

"Now, radiant one, tell me," he said.

Chi Huan told him what the boy had told her, and at the finish kept right on with: "We will lead what

regiments there are in the city to Shun and take it. If this mongrel called Hsai has even touched them, we will give him Ling-Chi, the death of the thousand cuts."

"No, courageous one. There can be no regiments led from the city."

The Princess Chi Huan stood up. "What?" she demanded hotly. "You do not understand, Lord Yang. I said that the men who had helped us are in danger! The men who took me from the curs that held me prisoner, and brought me back to my honorable father, and to you, my other father, in all safety and honor."

"I understand, little princess whom I love as a daughter. But the order of your mighty father still sound clear in my ears. It was that no troops were to be sent from the city until he returns."

"But this is something that my wise father did not foresee! He would be the first to go . . . You held me in your arms when I was a baby. I am the Princess Chi Huan of the Nine Clans—you are the War Brother of the Prince Chieh-yu, my honorable father—I command you to lead his troops to the city of Shun, at once!"

Yang shook his head. "No, gallant little heroine. See, it is war-time, and the hills boil always with enemies. Keen eyes are always on watch. We hold what we have only because those who would take the city and burn and slay know that we are prepared to meet them. That is why your father gave the order. It would require five thousand men to take Shun, and much time. My heart bleeds at the thought of the men who, as you say, helped us defend our city, but until the Prince Chieh-yu returns and orders differently, no men leave the city. In trying to rescue those men, we would expose our own thousands of helpless people to the slaughter."

PRINCESS CHI HUAN had known the grim old Manchu noble from the days when she first began to know anything or anybody, and she knew that any attempt to swerve him from the position he had taken would be like throwing water on a polished steel shield in hopes of breaking it.

She had tried out saying "I am the Princess Chi Huan," and the giving of a direct command more as a forlorn hope than anything else. She didn't think it would succeed, but she was desperate. If he had only gone with her father, she thought bitterly as she bowed.

"I ask your permission to depart," she said softly.

Yang had hard work restraining a smile as he saw the hot flames dancing in her eyes. "You have it, O lovely one in whose veins flows the blood of Aisin Gioro. Do not be wrathful with me. I but obey orders. On the return of your exalted father I will be glad to lead a rescue column. See, little flower, two more days and the Prince Chieh-yu will have returned."

The Princess Chi Huan did not answer, but bowed again and walked out, holding her slim young body as straight as possible, her proud little head well up.

Yang smiled as he sat down and picked up a piece of jade. He thought that the need of rescue was greatly exaggerated, and that if any one needed rescuing it would be Hsai, Yang having seen the white men in action and knowing that the bearers were of the T'aip'ing.

Even if he had thought that the need of rescue was great, he would not

have sent troops from the city intrusted to him. He had received definite orders, and come what may, he was going to obey them. He smiled again as he thought of the hot-tempered little princess, then calmly resumed his study of the jade.

Chi Huan walked slowly through the palace, her exquisite lips a tight red line. Jimmie and Red in danger, and she not able to help them? Well, she would help them. That—she began to think in the English she had absorbed at school in Washington—that darned old Yang! She'd show him that she could—

Her cousin, Kwang-si, a first-class man in the school for swordsmen, crossed her line of vision and she at once stopped thinking about Yang. Here was a tried and true confederate. He was a year older than Chi Huan—of the same blood and also general make-up.

Seeing her, he came up to greet her. As he got closer and saw the angry look, he grinned cheerfully. Although in the first-class, his handsome, boyish face was still unscarred, and he looked a good deal like Chi Huan, only in a masculine way.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Chi Huan.

"Lots of things," he teased, "especially that look on your face. Are you going to slay all in the city, O mighty warrior, or are you going to spare a few? Count me, your cousin, among those you spare, I beg of your—"

"Stop that at once," Chi Huan commanded. "Stop it and take that idiot's grin right off your lips or—or I will not tell you what I am going to do. I was planning on letting you help me—but now I do not think I will."

"It's off," Kwang-si answered promptly. He was fairly spoiling for something to do, and from past experience he knew that if the Princess Chi Huan had anything on tap there was generally excitement connected with it. Sometimes altogether too much when it came to explaining things afterward to the powers that be.

"Keep it off, then. Come into the gardens. I'll tell you about it there."

"I haven't much time," Kwang-si protested as they walked along. "The class trials start in two hours. I am to fight Ta-hai."

"I do not care with whom you fight. Here is a quiet place to sit down. Now listen, and do not interrupt me, either, as you have a bad habit of doing."

"I won't," promised Kwang-si, as they sat down under a flowering tree.

CHI HUAN told him the news the boy Chung had brought, and indignantly related what happened when she tried to get Yang to send troops to the rescue. Long before she had finished Kwang-si was as much interested as she was.

"I've just decided what to do," Chi Huan announced. "I will go to the War Lord Yo-fei. His city lies close to Shun, and he will do anything I ask."

"You? Go to Yo-fei? But how, Chi Huan? The country between here and there is up, and there are many bands of bandits—"

"Of course," Chi Huan interrupted, which she had told him was a bad habit, "if you are afraid to go you need not." She looked at her cousin calmly, her lovely eyes impassive.

"You mean that you and I—we couldn't make it, Chi Huan. You know I am not afraid, but—"

"There will be much honor and glory to be written in the scrolls of our

house if we are the ones that make payment for a debt owed."

"That is true," he answered, his eyes shining. "I will go. The hills are no place for a—" He was going to say "girl," but the expression in her eyes made him change his speech. "It's best that none go but swordsmen."

"If I do not go," Chi Huan said very firmly, "then no one goes. I know that you were going to say 'girl,' Kwang-si. I can climb the hills as well as you can and am as good at sword-play also—that is, I would be if my wrist were a little stronger," she confessed. "No, it is my expedition. Is the first class at liberty after the trials?"

"Yes. Not all, but most of them. Those that win, at any rate. See, Chi Huan, we could whisper quietly to those of our House and—"

"And to those of the House of Wang who owe us allegiance. Do it, Kwang-si. We will leave the city at the first darkness, one by one, and meet at the shrine on the hill."

"Splendid," her cousin agreed. "That will give us twenty swords anyway. We can cut our way through any who try to stop us from reaching Yo-fei."

"We will go; and the Lord Yo-fei will lead his troops to rescue Jimmie and Red and the rest. My honorable father did not order me not to leave the city." The princess was jubilant.

CHAPTER X.

A RESCUE THAT MISFIRED.

IT was dark, about ten o'clock at night, when the little party started away from the shrine. The princess Chi Huan was dressed exactly the same as the Manchu youths; her hair was tightly coiled and tucked under a cap. Twenty swords in all, counting the princess as one. None of them over seventeen and all, with the exception of herself, members of the first class in the school of swordsmen. Each boy had the keen sword presented by the Master of Swords after the trials that afternoon. Chi Huan also carried a sword in her silken sash—a smaller, ceremonial sword, but a real weapon just the same.

There were guns in Meng Wu, plenty of them, but they were heavy army rifles, and guns and cartridges alike were closely guarded. Every Manchu prefers swords, having practically been born with one in his hand. The use of the sword was formerly the better part of Manchu education, and is to a great extent to-day, in the North. Guns and shells are scarce in the hills, and swords are many.

They went like shadows down the hill on the side away from the city. This was an old game to them all, playing countrymen and bandits in the hills in the evenings. When they reached the level, they entered the timber, fading into the thick second growth like lean young panthers. From then until dawn, they went steadily toward the city of Yo-fei without any stopping, Chi Huan demonstrating the fact that she was not boasting when she had said, "I can climb the hills as well as you can."

She could—and slide down the next one, also. Twice they skirted flickering campfires in the distance and once almost ran on to a big party of Chinese bandits, marching without patrols or scouting parties ahead or on the flanks. The Manchus lay hidden in the timber on the side of the pass and watched them go by, with scornful eyes.

Just as it was getting fairly light, they stopped for a drink at a little

spring where two of the paths from the hills joined the one that led into a valley.

"We cross the valley," the Princess Chi Huan announced, "then up the hill on the other side and follow the stream that goes down. That is the way my honorable father and I came when we visited Yo-fei."

"I do not like it," a slim young Manchu said. "This valley is all in the open and the ruined temple of Lun Yu where Hsai set his trap is just across on the right side. There are many masterless men who use the ruins as headquarters. My father has told me tales about them. If we cross now in the light we will be seen and attacked. It is better to—"

"You question our safety, Liu?" the princess asked silkily.

It was the same as asking if he were afraid. She knew that he wasn't and so did the rest, but she flung the taunt to spur him forward.

The Manchu youth reacted as a thoroughbred horse would at the touch. His head went up as he answered haughtily, "I am Liu of the House of Yin, O Princess of the Nine Clans. I question your safety, not mine. I was going to suggest that we skirt the valley, thus avoiding delay which would come if we were attacked."

"What! You question my safety? Because I am a girl! I am not to be considered as a girl while on a—"

"Swords!" shouted Kwang-si. "A circle, two deep! Around the Princess Chi Huan! Quickly, brothers!"

HIS keen eyes had picked up the glint of steel among the trees on his right. As he shouted, from right, left, and rear ran groups of Chinese swordsmen, each group outnumbering the Manchus that instantly formed the circle and faced them courageously. The Chinese, outnumbering their foes more than three to one, formed a larger circle inclosing the Manchu ring, and with a yell started in.

"Stay inside," Kwang-si commanded as the Princess Chi Huan drew her sword and tried to get past the youth who stood in front of her and into the first line.

"I won't!" she answered hotly. "Step to one side, Yi-yan."

The boy addressed made no effort to obey. He did not intend to do so, nor did any of the rest. To go gayly in the woods or on an expedition with the Princess Chi Huan was one thing, and to let her expose herself to swordplay in deadly earnest was another.

In spite of her efforts the princess could not get by the second line before the Chinese closed. The first-class men took their stand as they had been taught in the school and awaited the attack, their young faces calm.

Some of the Chinese outdistanced their comrades and hit the line first. Those who made that mistake went down under the lightning-fast cut that followed the easy, graceful-looking parry.

The Chinese leader had seen Manchu swordplay before and recognized it now. He knew if they were going to capture the youths to sell as slaves, he had better use caution in attack. The bandits were older men and much heavier, and the leader figured that once he broke the circle, by using two or three men to each Manchu, he could come out with at least a few of them still alive.

His men stopped running in, formed, and came in a compact charge. The Manchus met it without a single backward step being taken, and the first eight or ten men in the charge went

down, but the sheer weight of it broke the circle.

There was a mad swirl of fighting and the Chinese drew off. The leader was finding it not an easy matter to take alive a Manchu who had a sword in his hand. It was like trying to pick up a rattlesnake in August with the bare hands and not get bitten.

Now the odds were much more even than before. Of the Manchus fifteen were left as they formed another circle around the Princess Chi Huan, who, when the first one had broken, had charged eagerly into the mêlée.

A Chinaman had cut at her, to have the blow warded off by Kwang-si who was beside her. As his sword darted in to reach the man's throat, the Princess Chi Huan had sputtered like an angry little wild cat. "T-take your own! He was mine!"

Kwang-si was too busy with the next man to pay any attention to her words, and she ran over to where Liu of the House of Yin, not quite sixteen, was engaged with two Chinese, showing that deftness with sword and foot-work to keep them apart which was afterward to make him a master swordsman.

Whatever the leader had originally planned, there was no attempt now to disarm the Manchus. His followers fought to kill, knowing it was a case of kill or get killed.

One of the Chinese drew off and crossed blades with the Princess Chi Huan. He had no idea that she was a girl and it would not have made any difference if he had. He cut at her, about knee-height, intending to let his sword be carried by the parry up to where he could slash down.

Chi Huan seemed to float over the sweeping sword and as she cleared it, she cut with a back-hand stroke that almost severed her opponent's head. Without stopping at all to see the effect of the blow she ran to the next man, who was trying to get in on a little circle that had three of the Manchu youths surrounded.

Some one saw her and yelled a warning. The Chinese turned and his heavy sword came forward to meet her lighter blade. He was tall and gaunt, with a reach of arm almost twice as long as the princess, and his sword also was much longer than hers. Kwang-si saw it and with a desperate effort killed the Chinaman he was fighting and ran in.

The cap of the princess had fallen off and her hair had loosened from the tight coils. Now it hung far below her knees in two braids. The Chinese leader, who was still on his feet, recognized her and shouted, "Back, Kao! Back! Do not strike! It is the Manchu Princess Chi Huan! Kill the rest, but she is worth many thousands of *taels* to us! Disarm her."

That was much easier said than done and the man Kao had no time even to try it. Kwang-si was on him, inside of his reach, and Kao had all he could do to protect his own life by raising his sword hilt as guard until he could jump back.

LIU and one other Manchu broke through the little circle at Chi Huan's side.

"Out!" Liu ordered. "Out! This way, princess. To the hills! I am in command and—"

"You are not! I am in command. I will not go—O brave sword, Kwang-si! See, Kwang-si has killed the cur who led!"

Four of the Chinese ran up, their swords bloody, evil smiles of triumph on their distorted faces. The three

young Manchus, their eyes flaming with joy of battle, actually took a step forward to meet them.

The odds had been too great to start with; of the twenty who had started from Meng Wu, fourteen lay dead on the ground, their young faces as impassive in death as they had been while watching the Chinese charge in. Around them lay the bodies of twice, and in some places three times as many Chinese. The members of the first class of the school of swords had died like Manchu swordsmen, in defense of their princess.

Of the sixty-odd Chinese, eighteen were left, the rest were dead or badly wounded. The Chinese were fresh and the six Manchus were tired, very tired. They had traveled all night and had then fought men much larger and stronger, though less skillful. Kwang-si was back to back with another youth, a little space away from the princess and her two companions. The other Manchu, Tseng, wounded in the right arm, had transferred his sword to his left hand and was fighting from a rock.

"Give me sword-room," commanded the Princess Chi Huan calmly. "We will lesson these curs and then go to Tseng's assistance."

"Get back of us!" Liu ordered.

There came the sharp crack of a rifle from the timber near the spring and the Chinaman nearest the princess fell back, his face curtained in blood.

With it there came the heavier detonations of Colt .45's, so fast that they sounded like a drum roll.

The other three Chinese pitched to the ground, the ones milling around Kwang-si and the other youth fell away, and the ones at the rock striking up from all sides at the young Manchu, Tseng turned to flee.

"Jimmie and Led!" the Princess Chi Huan announced in English. "They have come and lescued us."

From the timber came Jimmie Cordie, Red Dolan and John Carewe, Red in the lead. He ran to the little princess and swept her up in his brawny arms, sword and all.

"Are ye hurted, darlin'? Tell old Red. We saw the fight from the hill and got here as soon as we could. Have the dirty scuts touched ye, alanna? Mary Mother! Is that blood on the arm av ye? Show me the divil that done it and I'll take him apart with me hands. Speak to Red, acushla!"

"I'm all light, Led," Chi Huan answered. "That is not my blood. It is the blood of a cur that I killed. I am vely glad you came. Put me down."

Before he did it, the slim young arms of the Manchu princess tightened around the neck of Red Dolan and her velvet cheek pressed against his tanned rough one.

"We came to lescue you, Jimmie," she announced, "but you have lescued us instead."

"We thank you just the same," Jimmie answered gravely, "taking the will for the deed. From the looks of things, if you had had about ten or twelve more swords, you wouldn't have needed rescuing."

"How did you escape, Jimmie? Wold came that you had fallen into a tlap."

"We did, a bearcat of a trap. Wait until we see if we can do anything for the wounded, then I'll tell you all about it, Chi Huan."

THERE was not much that could be done. None of the fallen Manchus was alive. Those of the Chinese who were wounded were made as comfortable as possible and left beside the spring.

Kwang-si, with the help of Red Dolan, Carewe and the remaining five Manchus, laid the bodies out in a shallow cut up on the hillside, covering them with rocks to remain there until they could be removed to Meng Wu for proper burial.

"I am aflaid that my honolable father will be vely angly with me," Chi Huan said as she sat with Jimmie Cordie near the spring. "But when I heald that you and Led were in tlouble I had to come, Jimmie."

"Of course you did," Jimmie reassured her firmly. "Your father will understand. He will be so glad to see you that there will be no room for anger in his heart."

Chi Huan wasn't so sure about that, but she brightened up a little. "I—my healt glieves for the men of my House that have died for me. That is it, Jimmie, more than the anger of my honolable father."

"What better death than to go sword in hand fighting for their princess?" Jimmie asked gently. "They were Manchus, O Princess of the Nine Clans, and they fought and died as their ancestors have done, with a smile of joy on their lips and in their eyes. Their first fight was their last, but what difference does it make when death comes? Their spirits have gone on high to be welcomed with the smiles of the heroes who led the Hordes. It may be that from where they sit looking down on you, their princess, they had much rather see you smile, also, and hear you say, 'You fought and died in all honor for me.'"

Chi Huan nodded her proud little head. "That is light, Jimmie. See, I smile and say it." She looked up. "'You fought and died for me in all honor'. . . Now I feel better. Tell me all about what happened."

Jimmie told her, finishing with, "And when I passed out of the picture, Red and Carewe carried me to one of the outbuildings. I came to, in the morning, and we started for Shun. Red caught the first glimpse of the fight going on down here from the top of that hill and insisted on coming down to take a closer look-see."

"It was vely lucky for us that he did," Chi Huan said. "Now what will we do, Jimmie?"

"Well, it's a cinch we can't take the time to escort you back to Meng Wu. The good Lord only knows what is happening at Shun. George and the rest probably think we are hidden away somewhere, and are raising hell and high—I beg your pardon, Miss Iron Hat."

"I am not Missee Ilon Hat," Chi Huan reproved him. "Jimmie, we will go with you to Shun and make a—a sulvey? No, that is not the wold. Make an obselvation, that is it. Then we can go to Yo-fei and get help flom him."

"Do you think one of the boys could make it back to Meng Wu?"

"Why, yes, Jimmie. Any one of them could, I think."

"Well, you send one of them back to say that you have made contact with us and are all right. That we are headed for Shun, and after that for Yo-fei. I don't care very much about packing you along, but darned if I want to take the chance of your getting back to Meng Wu with five men."

"What?" demanded the princess, now fully recovered, glaring at him. "You don't care about me being—having me—well, I am here, Mr. Jimmie Coldie! And what is more, I am going to—"

Red, Carewe, and Kwang-si came up. "The Princess Chi Huan has just

started to tell me that she is going to Shun with us," Jimmie explained gravely.

"Where else would herself go but wid us?" demanded Red in surprise. "Sure the gas has made ye goofy, Jimmie Cordie."

"I will go with you, Led," Chi Huan announced loftily, "and not with Jimmie Coldie."

"'Tis together we'll all go, acushla. Jimmie is teasin' ye, darlin'. 'Tis ye that he loves like—"

"He has a vely stlange way of showing it," retorted Chi Huan, still angry.

"You misunderstood me, O Princess of the Nine Clans," Jimmie interrupted with a smile. "I said that I did not care to have you along, meaning that we were going into danger and were not hooked up very well to protect you. As far as you personally go, I am very glad to have you along, because, as Red says, I love you like the dickens, no foolin'."

Few people were proof against the smile of Jimmie Cordie, and Chi Huan was not one of them. She smiled promptly back at him. "I love you, too, Jimmie. I was vely silly not to undelstand how you meant it."

"Now that peace reigns once more," Jimmie said, "let's hold a council of war. First, O Princess of the Manchu, allow me the honor of presenting to you John Carewe, an Englishman."

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS.

THERE was no further attack on the hilltop shrine in the city of Shun during the day. Hsai had watched the digging of trenches from a roof top, and as he started down had ordered, "Let there be no further attack. The foreign devils lack food. Sooner or later they must come down or starve. Place troops around the hill far back and hold men in reserve."

His officers were glad enough to hear that order, because they knew that to get their men to go up the hill they would have to go with them.

Darkness came, and then, while the T'aip'ing were on watch, it began to get light. Shih-kai was stooping to arouse Grigsby when one of the T'aip'ing warned softly, "One crawls up the hill. Shall I slay?"

"No," answered Shih-kai, touching Grigsby's shoulder. "Let him come in, then disarm him."

Two minutes later a boy stood in front of Grigsby and the others, who had wakened like so many cats at a slight touch. It was Kwang-si, the Manchu cousin of the Princess Chi Huan.

"Do you speak English?" Grigsby asked.

Kwang-si nodded and smiled proudly, "Vely well, honolable captain. Led Dolan and Jimmie Coldie and the Plincess Chi Huan say quit visiting and come out and join them and make it vely snappy, they want to go home."

"Thanks for the invitation," Putney said with a dry grin.

"For de love of Mike," the Yid sputtered. "Den dey vas out all de time, ain't it?"

"Where are they?" Grigsby asked.

"On other side of the liver. Catchee man know fold, make him tell."

"I don't get that. Are we to catch a man that knows a ford?"

"No, we alleady catchee one. He tell us light away. Jimmie Coldie say come before molning—no can see us get back in hills."

"Mr. Cordie," said the Boston Bean

gravely, "having got us in this jam, is kindly explaining how we are to get out."

Grigsby laughed. Now that he and the rest knew that Jimmie and Red were safe, the world became once more a happy hunting ground.

"We'll thank Mr. Cordie when we get there. No use of waiting to say good-by to Hsai. Let's go—same formation as before. Out and over the wall. You stay with Shih-kai, young feller. What is your name?"

"Kwang-si of the Nine Clans. Can I have one of the little guns?"

"Take my Colt and belt," the Bean said smilingly. "Don't shut your eyes any more than you have to while shooting it."

"No shuttee eye at all," answered Kwang-si proudly. "I am a vely good shot."

The troops stationed on the side where a wall inclosed the palace were all doing what Grigsby had said they would be doing. Most of them were asleep, and those that were awake were huddled together trying to keep warm. The gray dawn is cold in that part of China, and their ill-conditioned bodies were not able to withstand it. There was some little pretense of keeping a guard line, but not much.

Grigsby, seeing this, changed his order and put the T'aip'ing in front. They, snarling T'aip'ing threats, went through the Chinese like a knife through paper, slashing right and left with their keen swords. The Chinese rolled and tumbled and ran out of the way or threw themselves flat on their faces.

Right after the T'aip'ing came the four white men and the bearers of the Brownings. With them went Kwang-si, his Colt going *pow-pow-pow!* first on one side then on the other, as fast as he could pull trigger. Through, over the palace wall, down a wide street and then into the open they went without losing a man.

But the yells and the Colt reports had roused the city, and they had not got halfway to the river before Hsai's men were in pursuit.

"This way! This way!" shouted Kwang-si, running to the right. They reached the river bank, slid down it and went through the water that came shoulder high and fast enough almost to sweep them off their feet. As they scrambled up the other side, a rifle and two Colts began to fire at the first of Hsai's men who had reached the other bank.

THE Bean was the first up, with his bearers who had clung desperately to the Browning. He saw Jimmie Cordie and Red, with the Princess Chi Huan and a man he did not know, and two or three youths behind them.

He did not wait to say anything, only grinned, waved his hand, and turned to his work. As the gun was set down he began clearing the top of the other bank with it.

The Yid arrived with full equipment, and his gun joined in. Hsai's men, who had lined the high bank, promptly disappeared, and not even a head showed after the first two or three bursts.

"Never mind any wah-wah!" shouted Grigsby. "Get going! They can cross in two or three places above and below. Start from where you are, Jimmie. We've got a half an hour before they can make contact on this side. Not much ammunition left, Jimmie."

They didn't have a half an hour by at least ten minutes. Hsai had more crossings than Grigsby knew about.

As the little band reached the top of one of the hills where the path narrowed and turned an abrupt corner, the Yid, who was looking back every so often, yelled, "Oi, dey short-cutted on us! Assistance for de rear guard!"

Up the path and along the sides of two of the near hills that converged into the one they were on, a little lower than the path, came Hsai's troops.

It was a hard place to charge up, and the Chinese did not try it very long. They sought cover on all sides of the path and on the hills. But they stayed right where they were and did not attempt to run back down.

Putney laughed. "The friends we were visiting are coming right along with us, Jeems. What would you suggest now?"

Jimmie looked at the hills, at the path, down at the other side, then grinned. "I can hold 'em from this time on," he announced. "This is the only path leading through, anywhere near. By the time they have climbed eight or ten of those mountains and crossed that valley, you can be well in the hills. Hop along, you gents. Leave me all the belts and—"

"What?" yelled Red. "Leave ye? I'll stay meself, ye scut."

"Hold it a minute," Grigsby said quietly. "We've got plenty of time at the moment, Jimmie. They don't want any of our entertainment up here until they can attack from both front and rear. Let's sit down."

He also had been looking at the hills and the path and knew what Jimmie meant. One man with a machine gun could delay pursuit from those in front until he was dead. To circle and come up in the rear meant that any of Hsai's men doing it would be forced to swing way out, even if they did find other passes in the hills. It would give the party on the hill at least three hours' start, and in the hills that meant everything. But it meant death for the man who acted as rear guard.

Carewe was introduced, the Princess Chi Huan's presence was explained, and then the Yid and the Bean slipped away to the rear on a reconnoitering trip. They came back in a few minutes, and the Yid announced:

"De hills around de valley go straight up and down, mit no paths except at de end of de valley. If ve can make it across ve are in de clear."

Jimmie Cordie laughed. "Go down and explain to our boy-friends that we want time out while we cross. Right here is where we play Custer's Last Stand, with Jimmie playing Custer."

"You're mixed in your history, Jeems," the Boston Bean said. "You mean Horatius at the Bridge. You know, 'Will not the villain drown? But for this stay, ere close of day, we would have sacked the town.' Inasmuch as you have shown your ignorance, I'll play Horatius. Get going, you—"

"We haven't much time, Jimmie," Grigsby interrupted quietly. "Let's dispense with the kidding. If we did not have the Princess Chi Huan along I'd say to start down and give them all we've got until the finish, but we can't take a chance with her. There are only three belts left for the machine guns, and once in the open down there they'd use rifles. But one man here can hold 'em back until the rest get in the clear."

"BUT, Geolge," Chi Huan broke in, "I am not aflaid to die. We can lun acloss or—why not stay light here? I sent back a messenger to tell my honolable father or his War Blother that I was going to Shun with Led and Jimmie. They will come and—"

"They could not make it in time, Chi Huan," Grigsby answered. "Probably right now this Hsai is swinging his troops around. Once they get into the valley, we could not hold this place for twenty minutes without plenty of ammunition."

"Then I will go acloss with my swordsmen and wait for you and—"

"Run right smack into some more bandits or what-not. Nothing doing, Missee Iron Hat," Jimmie Cordie said with a grin. "At that, if Shih-kai went with you, we—"

"What?" demanded Red Dolan. "Herself in the hills again wid only a few swordsmen?"

"Pipe down, Red," Grigsby said. "Let's get down to cases. More of Hsai's men are arriving every minute. Here it is, cold turkey. If we send the Princess Chi Huan across first, even if the T'aip'ing go with her, the chance that she could win through to Meng Wu is one in a hundred. Given that she did, we cannot hold this point for more than a couple of hours at the most, and Hsai would wipe us out once we were in the valley. If we start for the hills now, they will be right behind us.

"Jimmie is right. One man with a machine gun can hold them back until all of the rest get across. Once on the other side, if six men with rifles and Colts, to say nothing of the T'aip'ing and Manchu swords, can't take the Princess Chi Huan home through the hills where no large force can be thrown against them at once, they better call it a day."

"My swolds can hold this path," declared the princess. "They will stay and—"

"Be a good girl, darlin'," Red answered, "and let us men settle it. 'Tis—"

"If we stay here much longer talking about it," Putney said, "it will settle itself. I'll stay and do what Jimmie calls 'play with the neighbors' children.' They are going to try it out in a minute or so. Get going. I'll take the—"

"Ye will?" demanded Red. "And who the hell do ye think ye are, Arthur Putney? 'Tis me that will stay."

"Vait!" The Fighting Yid bowed and smirked at them all. "I have held it an election, und vish to announce de result. I am elected to stay by a majority of von. I ain't got it no von dot vill miss me, und—"

The Boston Bean laughed. "You were elected by fraud, Mr. Cohen, and the result is thrown out. I'll do the—"

"Heads up!" s h o u t e d Putney. "Here they come!"

Hsai had started one company up the narrow path, more to see if the foreign devils could still bite than in the hopes of wiping them out. He was doing what Grigsby thought he would—sending a regiment around to get into the valley at the rear.

"Don't use t h o s e Brownings," Grigsby ordered, as he raised his rifle.

The sleet of steel-jacketed bullets that swept down the path proved conclusively that the quarry was still very much alive and could fight. What was left of the company ran back down the hill.

"He's started it off," Grigsby said. "You've got to move out promptly, Jimmie. I'll take this over. Bean, I'll take your gun. All right—never mind any sob-sister stuff. You birds all know how much I think of you. Start off, Jimmie, and make it with the well-known snap."

"Not by a damn sight. I got you into this jam and—"

Carewe stepped up, very casually indeed. "I say, you chaps. You are all

together, you know, and I'm quite at a loose end. I can handle the Browning like what-for. So I will—"

"Thanks, old man," Jimmie answered, "but it's our hunt. Pull out a little and let us settle it."

"There isn't anything to settle," Grigsby said. "I am the ranking officer here, and I'll take it over, as I have said. Move out, Jimmie."

"We're not in the army now. I am going to—"

"Me right wid ye, Jimmie, ye scut."

"For vy is de argument? Could it be dot I would let it some von else—"

"I've explained once that I am the proper one to—"

"NO use," George," Putney said, with a quiet smile. "It's a case of 'After you, my dear Alphonse,' all the way around. Better put it on the knees of the Nine Red Gods and—"

"On the knees of the gods," Jimmie said slowly. "On the knees of the—Listen, you birds. We all know that any one of us would stay and all of us think we ought to be the one. Putt just called the turn. We'll put it on the knees of the gods. We'll draw for it, and the man that wins stays. How's that?"

"Jake mit me," said the Fighting Yid.

"All right here," the Boston Bean agreed.

"That solves it, Jimmie," Grigsby drawled.

"'Tis a brilliant idea ye have once in a while," Red said, "but how are ye—"

"Let Jimmie tell us, Red," Putney interrupted. "It's the only way out, Jimmie. I'm satisfied."

"All right. Here are six cartridges." Jimmie drew six of the 30-30 cartridges from his belt. "I'll scratch one and put 'em in my hat. Each man reaches for one with his eyes shut—and no damn' feeling around for the scratch, either. Reach in, take the first one touched, and out with it. Never mind rubbing your finger-tips, Yid."

"Oi, Jimmie, look at the Codfisher. He is doing it on de pants vare it is—"

"Shuffle them up and then lay them with the scratch down, Jimmie," Grigsby said. "Each man will turn his back while you are doing it; when you call his name he will turn and pick one up. You will take the last one, old kid. I know you birds full well. None of your sleight-of-hand stuff will work that way. The man that stays does so at command of the gods."

"Let me take your knife, Red," Jimmie said.

Red handed him a knife, and Jimmie made a little scratch on one of the shells. While he was doing it, Shih-kai, who was watching the troops below, said softly to the T'aip'ing next to him: "If the Black-eyed Smiling One draws the cartridge that tells him to stay, he will order us forward with the rest. We will go, but only far enough to turn and come back to die with him."

Carewe came up to George Grigsby. "I say, you chaps, I want to be included. It isn't cricket to push me out. I am a man the same as you are, and I can—"

"Well, suh," drawled the Kentuckian, "it's this way, Mr. Carewe. We all know that you are a man; but, like Jimmie said, this is our hunt. We've been together, the six of us, for a right long time, and don't you see that we couldn't let a stranger do what one of us—"

"I see that, but—but—"

"All set," Jimmie called from the

little rock on which he had laid out the shells. "Line up, you gents."

Grigsby looked at the slim young Englishman and smiled. "I'm sorry, old man. It may be that some day you will not be a—stranger to us."

The little Princess Chi Huan sat on a rock, surrounded by her young Manchus, watching with shining eyes. After the protest that her "swolds" could hold the path, she had been silent, sensing that that was what her honorable big brothers wanted just then.

The five big men, all of them calm-faced, lined up, their backs to Jimmie. He called "Red!" and as Red turned and stooped, Jimmie added, "Don't show until we all have them in our hands."

One by one they turned at their names and picked up their shells. Jimmie, who had stepped away a little, picked up the last one. Each man stood with clenched fist outstretched, a smile on his lips and in his eyes.

"All set? Open up!"

Five of the shells were turned in the opened hands and then dropped. Arthur Stuart Putney, Foreign Legion, A. E. F., fighter in the far places, stood as if at attention, his hand as steady as ever, the smile still on his lips and in his eyes. On the shell in his hand there was the scratch of a knife-point.

"All right," he said, as quietly and calmly as ever. "Move out. I'll take your gun, Yid, I'm more used to it. Let's consider it all said. Good-by and good luck. I'll be waiting for you up behind some star."

THE shell was in his right hand, and he transferred it to his left as Jimmie Cordie stepped up to him with outstretched hand. "Good-by, Putt," Jimmie said as they shook hands. "It's all said."

Jimmie's face was as impassive as an officer's on parade, but he could not hide the feeling in his heart from showing in his eyes. As he let go of Putney's hand he ordered: "Shih-kai—start your men down. Chi Huan, send your swords right after and go with them. Carewe, you go with the Princess Chi Huan."

"Filst," said the little Princess of the Nine Clans, as she rose and came up to where Putney stood, "I will say good-by to my vely honolable elder blother, who dies that we may live. Good-by, Althur Putney. Your name shall be englaved in lettels of gold on the tablets of honor of the Nine Clans."

The tears made the velvet black eyes misty, and the proud little Manchu hid her face for a moment against Putney's sleeve. Then, before Putney could answer, she followed her swords around the corner of the path that led to the valley.

Shih-kai snarled an order, and as the T'aip'ing came by Putney their swords flashed up in the salute given superior officers.

Red shook hands. "Good-by, Putt. The light will go out av the world widout the quiet smile av ye."

"Keep that red head of yours up and it will be plenty light. Good-by, Red, old-timer."

The Yid was next. "Oi, Putt! For vy didn't it I got de right shell? Good-by, Mistair Good Player in Everything."

"Good-by, Yid. Don't loot any more than possible and quit trying fancy shots."

The Boston Bean stammered as his hand closed on Putney's. "I c-can't say anything, Putt. Always since I have known you I have—damn it all, it's like Jimmie said—it's all been said many times by actions."

Putney smiled. "Good-by, Codfish. I know what you are trying to say."

Carewe had hung back, but now, as he saw that Grigsby evidently wanted to be the last with Putney, he came up with outstretched hand. "I say, you know, it's awfully sportin' of you. You chaps are—are—oh, I say, you know what I mean and all that sort of rot, what, what?" And without waiting for Putney to answer he hurried away.

Putney laughed and turned to Grigsby. They had, in some ways, been closer together than with the rest. Both big men, both more or less silent men, both fighting men from the ground up, and both with the same code. One from the mountains of Kentucky, the other from the green hills of Vermont, but of the same pure Anglo-Saxon breed.

"There's a chance that we will be met by Chieh-yu's men," Grigsby said. "If we are, you may be able to hold out, Putt."

"You won't if you don't get started, old settler. No need of any wah-wah between you and me. I'll hold 'em."

"That's right, Putt," Grigsby drawled. "No need. We'll all pick you up on the one-way trail sooner or later. Good-by."

The two shook hands, each smiling, his eyes calm and looking deep into the shining white soul of the other. Then Grigsby stepped back a foot, came to attention, saluted, and walked around the corner and down the path.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GODS DECIDE.

THE rocks at the path were so bunched that Hsai's men could not tell whether there were one or two machine guns waiting for them. Coming straight up in the last fifty yards, they would be able to see the muzzles, if they got that far, which they had not succeeded in doing—yet.

Before the retreating party had got halfway across the valley they heard the *rat-tat-rat-tat!* and stopped to listen.

"Von half a belt," the Yid announced as the firing ceased. "Mit no jamming. I vish dot I—"

"Come on!" commanded Jimmie Cordie. "Make your wish afterward. Do a little running. The sooner we get to Meng Wu, the sooner we can come back for Putt."

Before they reached the hills there was another burst of firing, longer this time, then silence as before. Jimmie Cordie stopped and whirled around. Red saw him do it and instantly turned too.

"Steady, Jimmie," Grigsby drawled. "If you were back there, would you want to see any of us come back? Play the game, old kid."

"That's right, George," Jimmie answered through tight lips. "I won't break again."

As they climbed the first steep hill there came faintly to them another burst of machine gun fire, and then, right afterward, rifle fire almost as fast.

"Oi, Beaneater," said the Yid. "He is down to de rifle, ain't it? Und ve are safe in de hills."

"Two things I know already!" rasped the Bean curtly. So curtly that the Fighting Yid looked at him curiously.

"All men must die," said Abraham Cohen slowly, without a trace of an accent. "Would you want a better death than Putney is meeting—for us?"

"No," answered the Bean, "I wouldn't."

"Vell, den," went on the Yid, with a grin once more, his usual accent strong once more, "Vot is de use of cryin', ain't it?"

"Oh, for the love of the angel chorus!" snorted the Bean in a more normal tone. "Get up there with Jimmie or Red. I should have stayed and—"

"You stay? Und you engaged mit Katherine Neville? Vait until I tell her vot you—"

"Go on away from me, Yid, before I bend a gun over your head. I don't feel like—"

"I am going, Codfisher . . . You und me is pudners, ain't it?"

"Yeah, boy, all the time, Abie—only I want to—I'm thinking about Putt and—"

"I am thinking also, but—I am going, Mr. Vinthrop!" The Yid moved up to where Jimmie and Red were with the Princess Chi Huan, who was frankly crying as she ran lightly beside Red who had offered to carry her.

After one look at Jimmie's set face, gray in spite of the deep tan, and Red's scowling one, the Yid decided to run, too, and say nothing. He was not hard-hearted, and he really liked Putney very much, but he had not been with him as much as the rest. To the Fighting Yid, Putney was a good first-class fighting man and a companion to have along anywhere. To the rest he was a brother.

TWO hours later, as they came to the comb of one of the hills, the T'aip'ing who were out in front almost ran head first into the advance guard of a Chinese regiment. The T'aip'ing took cover like so many quail and Shih-kai ran back with the news. The Princess Chi Huan climbed up on a spur, took one look and slid down in Red's awaiting arms.

"It is my honolable father! Now we will go back and lescue Putt. Cally me to the top, Led, so I can hully them on!"

The Prince Chieh-yu had returned to his city to be told that the Princess Chi Huan and some of the first class of the school for swords was missing. Right after the messenger from the valley arrived with the word that the princess, with Red Dolan and Jimmie Cordie, were *en route* to Shun.

The Prince Chieh-yu ordered out two of his fresh regiments and left for Shun without a moment's pause.

As he came up the Princess Chi Huan, after seeing his smile, threw herself literally into his arms. "I tried to rescue Jimmie and Red," she sobbed, her cheek close to his. "Yang would not go because you ordered him to keep all troops in the city. I am the one to blame for the acts of the youths of—"

"Quiet, little flower. You are forgiven. They obeyed your orders and died for you, that is all. What else could the princess of the Nine Clans do but go to the rescue of her honorable elder brothers?"

"But Putney is not rescued! He is back there holding the curs of Hsai from our trail."

"What?" demanded Chieh-yu, putting Chi Huan down. "I see that he is not here. Go back with the youths, priceless one."

Jimmie Cordie stepped forward. "Putney is holding a path on the other side of the valley. You spoke once of a matter of payment, Prince Chieh-yu. Order this regiment forward with me."

Chieh-yu turned to the colonel of the regiment: "Captain Cordie takes command. Bring your regiment up on the double."

"Jimmie, ye scut," yelled Red. "'Tis back after Putt ye are going! I'm wid ye, Jimmie darlin'."

"Fair enough. George, no use for all to go. Red and I will get him if—if—come on, you big ape, show me some running for your size."

When they got to the foot of the hill leading up from the valley and started up, still somewhat in advance of the rest, Jimmie and Red heard the *pow-pow-pow* of a Colt. Mingled in with it were rifle shots, and as they neared the top, now on a dead run, they heard excited yells.

"He's holdin' 'em, praise be to all the good saints!" Red panted as he and Jimmie with Shih-kai and the T'aip'ing, the Manchu colonel and several of the officers with drawn revolvers, called on all they had for the final spurt. "I heard the — God! The Colt av him is still!"

THEY came to the top and around the big rock that made the corner just in time to see Putney, bleeding from countless wounds, go down under a pile of swordsmen who were worrying around him like a pack of dogs around a bear.

Down; then the pile heaved up and Putney came up. As he did, a Chinese rifleman standing over to one side, took aim and fired point-blank at him from not more than six feet. Even as he fired, the rifleman fell dead with a bullet from Jimmie Cordie's Colt in his brain.

Red let out a yell that was like that of a maniac and charged down, followed by the T'aip'ing. The attackers looked up the path, yelled in shrill fear, and ran. The Manchu colonel and the officers with him opened fire on them as Red got to Putney. The rifle bullet had hit him square in the chest and spun him around. He saw Red and knew him through the haze. He tried to stop the turn, but couldn't, and fell across the machine gun. Jimmie reached him almost as Red did and lifted him up.

"Jimmie—and—Red," Putney said thickly through the blood that was trickling out of his gray lips. "I—knew—that you would come eventu—" His head dropped against Jimmie's arm.

Jimmie turned it so that he could see the still face whose lips held the same little smile as always. He looked, then slipped his hand over Putney's heart and held it there for a moment.

Then he laid Putney gently down and stood up. Red was watching him, his face working in spite of his efforts to hold it.

"God receive the soul of a gallant gentleman," Jimmie Cordie said softly.

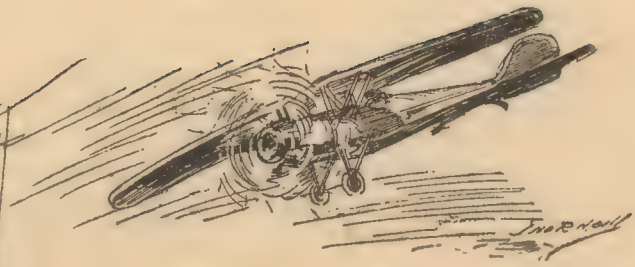
THE END.

Church Built from One Tree

THE immense size of the California redwood trees is evidenced by the First Baptist Church of Santa Rosa, California, built entirely of lumber cut from one tree. The church includes a vestibule, lofty steeple, large auditorium, and spacious social and class rooms. Even the shingles of the roof were cut from the redwood giant.

R. P. Stevenson.

Turning over and over, he plunged into the gorge



Skeleton Wings

Airman Tex Gainesville didn't like to stir up old troubles or old bones; but his partner Payload was fanatically determined to ferret out the grisly secret of that stripped and desert-whitened airplane

By ALLAN K. ECHOLS

YOU can lay it to coincidence, but I say it must have been the inexorable guiding hand of Providence. I don't think anything else in the world would have made "Payload" catch a glimpse of that tiny spot in the desert three thousand feet below us.

Payload slapped the cowling until I heard him and looked back to see him pointing off to his left. I couldn't make out what he was looking at for a minute, but finally I spotted it myself. Then I grabbed the binoculars and had a good look. I shook my head, puzzled, and Payload shut off the motor, nosing her down and throwing her into a spiral. We landed and taxied up to what was, by all odds, the most gruesome object I have ever seen in my life.

Her nose buried in the sand, tail up like a hiding ostrich, was the skeleton of a light biplane, desert-scoured till it was unrecognizable. A little of the fabric had withstood the powerful blast of the sweeping desert sand and hung in drooping pendants from the bleached and barren ribs of the wings and fuselage. The wood of the framework was as white as leprosy; it also was sand-blasted and bleached by the desert sand and sun. A lone buzzard that had sat perched high on the upended rudder frame eyed us with suspicion and, lazily stretching its vermin-covered wings, flapped away.

We scrambled out of the cockpit of our Standish two-seater and walked toward the grisly wreck without uttering a word. Then we both stopped dead in our tracks!

Still hanging by the belt strap was

the remaining part of the skeleton of a man! Its grinning skull had become detached and had rolled a few feet away from the wing of the ship. It lay there with its ghastly eye-sockets upward, the teeth in its skinless jaws gleaming white in the brilliant sun.

I shivered as though a bitter cold wind had suddenly enveloped me. Both of us stood motionless and speechless for several minutes.

"Poor devil," finally muttered Payload. "Wonder who he was?"

"We can find out, I guess," I commented in a hushed voice. "The license ought to be tacked on the instrument board." But a search proved unsuccessful, the license had long since been scoured away by sand.

"Let's swing on her. Maybe we can haul her nose out of the sand. We can get the motor number, anyway, and trace it after we get back to San Diego."

WE went around to the back of the ship and Payload boosted me up. I grabbed one of the longerons at a point as near the tail as I could reach, and Payload turned me loose, leaving my weight to act as leverage to pull the tail down and the nose up out of the sand. The engine was buried so deep that my partner had to swing onto my legs and add his own weight to mine before the skeleton ship was righted.

"Nothing cracked up about her," observed Payload. "Must have just run out of gas and nosed over in landing."

"That wouldn't account for the dead pilot," I argued. "A little thing like that wouldn't likely have done him any damage. He'd have piled out right away."

I started to join Payload in examining the motor. I had taken several steps when, not noticing my feet, I kicked the head of the skeleton. It rattled as it rolled over, and then settled, still looking up and grinning that ghastly grin of death. Cold shivers dashed up and down my spine. But as I stared in fascinated horror at the hideous object, something caught my attention.

"Look here!" I cried in surprise. It was to be a fateful discovery.

We studied the bleached skull more closely.

"Yep, it's a bullet hole, sure as hell."

Payload stooped over and picked up the gruesome object, examining it closely. He held it to his ear and shook it as one would shake a coconut to see if it was ripe. Again we heard that hollow, metallic rattle.

Payload turned the skull over and over in his hand, finally working out the secret of the sound—out of the skull dropped a flattened and misshapen lead bullet which must have lodged in the brain. While I stood by, shivering as if I had been caught in an Arctic storm—dead men make me plenty uncomfortable—he picked up the bullet and examined it.

"Murder!" he remarked. "This boy was shot in the back of the head with a forty-five pistol."

"I guessed he was shot when I saw that bullet-hole," I couldn't help remarking. I wasn't feeling any too good about our hanging around this desert graveyard.

Payload looked at me scornfully.

"I know," he grunted, "but don't you see, there's more here than just meets the eye. For instance, was he killed in the air? If so, who landed the ship?"

"I'd say the murderer landed it," I hazarded.

"Not necessarily," argued Payload. "Didn't you ever hear of Boelke's Comet during the war?"

"I ain't never gone in for astronomy," I answered.

"Boelke was a German flying instructor," explained Payload, ignoring my sarcasm. "He taught Richthofen to fly. He had a class out one day and they saw a plane flying along with two dead men in it. That ship was later found behind the English lines fifty miles back of the front. It had run out of gas and it was so well balanced that it had made a perfect dead-stick landing. Now this bird could have done the same thing."

"Maybe so," I grunted. There wasn't any use arguing with my hard-headed partner once he had got interested in something.

"And then again," he said, half to himself, "who is this? And what's it all about?"

"I give up," I answered. "We can't find out who it is or what it's all about." I was long overdue to get away from this place, according to my feelings.

"That's just what we're going to find out. And we're also going to find out who killed him, Thickhead."

"That ain't no way to talk in the presence of the dead, Sherlock," I answered. "Come on. Let's twist her tail and get out o' here."

Payload put the bullet in his pocket and he examined the engine of the skeleton ship. It was a Knight Whirlpool, serial number J-48392.

"Let's go, Sonny Boy," announces Payload. "With that motor number you and I are going to see that justice spreads her wings over this sin-ridden land. Do murder, will they? It's gettin' so a young girl ain't safe alone on the streets after three o'clock in the morning, much less a poor innocent flyer all unprotected over a big desert."

I knew that when Payload got facetious he was trying to cover up his real feelings, otherwise I'd probably have tried to slog him one behind the ear for joking around skeletons. I'm a bit ticklish about them sort o' things. They don't make me sleep any better.

THIS was one time that I think he was sorry for what he said. He didn't mention as much, but his actions spoke louder than words. It happened when we got back to San Francisco. He had started tracing the motor when we reached the San Diego end of the run, and we had a wire waiting when we got back up the coast.

The skeleton ship had belonged to Dave Sparks. Maybe that didn't give us both a jolt!

He had been missing two years and everybody had assumed that he was lost in the Pacific along with the others on that Hawaiian flight. He had started in that race and had never been heard from since.

Dave and Payload had been partners once, long before I ever knew either of them, and they had been close friends always. So when Payload found out who it was, he started to work with a vengeance in every sense of the word.

"I'll get that hombre that bumped Dave off if it takes every nickel I can beg, borrow, or steal," he swore. And I knew Payload well enough to know that he'd try to keep his word.

For my own part, I didn't feel like entering into the spirit of the man-hunt. As I've admitted, corpses are things I don't like to get near. And when a man's dead, there's no sense in bothering about him any more. But Payload wanted me to help him and there was nothing I could do to get out of it.

"You ought to be interested in seeing the killer uncovered," argued my partner. "You was working for Dave when he disappeared."

"I'm no detective," I grumbled. "Sparks is dead, ain't he? Findin' the other fellow won't put any meat back on those bones."

Payload snorted; he was all steamed up about this thing. But he didn't answer.

I didn't see any use in mentioning it right then, but the truth of the matter was that I wasn't working for Dave when he disappeared—he had fired me. We had had some argument about how much my share of the proceeds of the sale of a ship belonged to me and how much was his. Anyway, out of the two thousand dollars he got the day before he started on the Hawaiian hop he only gave me two hundred dollars. I felt that I was entitled to more, but when I tried to show him that he was gypping me, he fired me. And before daylight on the following morning he had taken off for Hawaii and that was the last that was ever heard of him.

I had a pretty good hunch Payload would have got sore at me if I'd said anything to reflect on Sparks. I didn't want to be crossways with Payload.

Payload got busy right away.

"I'm going out there and see if I can dig up some more evidence. I need some kind of a clew," he explained. "Comin' along?"

Much as I hated to go back to that scene of death, I followed him into the Standish and we took off. And to add to my dislike of this second trip out to that spot was the fact that one of them desert gales was blowing. You might just as well be out on one of them African deserts, as far as the sand is concerned.

Anyway, we made it.

The little Standish was bouncing like a wagon over a corduroy road. Sand filled the air like a thick dry fog for an altitude of two thousand feet. The fine brown particles beat against the cowling like the sand from one of those blast guns that they clean stone buildings with. It was awful.

And I was getting fed up with the whole idea. Dave was dead and there was no trace of his murderer. For the life of me I couldn't see why Payload didn't just report the fact and leave it to the law to do what they could. It certainly seemed a hopeless task to try to find out anything after all this time. But Payload had made up his mind, so there was nothing for me to do but follow him.

THE wind on our tail got us out there in nothing flat. We crawled out of the cockpit and Payload started to the wreck. Right there was where I balked.

"If you're goin' to hang around that skeleton," I announced definitely, "you're going to have to do it by yourself."

Payload grunted something about "coward" and went on toward the wreck. He crawled all over the fuselage, examined its engine and instrument board, studied the sand around the ship and the cockpit full of bleached bones.

I didn't know what he'd find, but I was getting more and more sick of the whole investigation every minute. What did it matter if Dave had been his friend? Dave had made lots of enemies. He was always putting his foot down on something that didn't seem "just right" to him.

I decided right there that I had got enough of this. I jammed my foot on the starter. The prop picked up in-

stantly and I taxied across the sand. If Payload wanted to hang around that skeleton, I'd give him a chance to spend as much time as he wanted with it.

But the wind was still blowing harder than I realized. A sudden gust caught the Standish under the left wing, dipping the right one into the sand. The ship snapped around into a ground loop, and I had to shut off the motor instantly to keep from nosing over. If I had cracked the propeller —I shivered at the thought of those bleached bones.

"Hey! What the devil you tryin' to do?" shouted Payload, running up breathlessly. "You trying to leave me out here?"

"Of course not," I snapped. "My foot just accidentally touched the starter and the whole works went haywire. I thought she was a crack-up, for a minute," and I grinned uncomfortably.

Payload said nothing, but climbed into the cockpit and we plowed into the head wind back to San Francisco.

"What'd you find out?" I asked him when we were landed.

"I found out who killed him—I think," answered Payload. "And I think you and I can get him dead to rights if we work it just right. But we got to be careful. You want to come in on it?"

There wasn't much I could say except "Yes," since I had been in on it all before. I was plenty curious to know who was spotted as the killer and how he'd fixed on him.

"Well, here's what we do," explained Payload. "You go home and get your gun. I'll get mine. And in the meantime I'll round up four men that I'm thinking about. We'll all go out to the wreck, and I'll bet you a good dinner we get the murderer. We'll take him out there with us, and an officer to take charge of him."

I didn't like the prospects of any gunplay, but just to be on the safe side, I carted my gun along.

In less than an hour we were all headed back to that wreck. It was getting to be an obsession with me now. It seemed that every few hours we had business somewhere around that bunch of bones lying out there on that desert.

There were two shiploads of us. Payload and I were in our Standish, a deputy sheriff and Howard Farnum in the second ship.

I WAS beginning to see what Payload was driving at, now. Howard Farnum operated a school and flying service that used the hangar next to the one that had been occupied by Dave Sparks out at Holman Airport. Farnum was a nasty cuss and he and Sparks had never got along. Farnum had been trying to buy out Sparks's business, but Dave had refused to sell. The men had never had anything to do with each other after that—except to snap like a couple of strange curs when they met.

It looked as clear as daylight. Payload had figured that Farnum had managed to do away with Sparks to get rid of a business rival.

There was a wild glitter in Payload's eyes that I didn't like. I couldn't figure it out for a minute. I thought he had gone crazy or something like that. And when we were all four assembled around the remains of the wrecked ship he acted still more erratic.

"Gentlemen," he started, "lying here is the remains of as white a man as ever gripped a joystick. And listening to me now is the man that killed him."

I watched Payload as he was talking. It was easy to see that he was fast

losing control of himself. And you couldn't blame him much, considering that Dave Sparks was one of his best friends. But I was more worried than ever. I thought his mind would snap altogether.

He kept on talking. He told how Dave had started out in the game. How he had worked to support a widowed mother, fighting against all the odds of poverty and business depression and everything. He painted pictures of Dave as he had known him, kind, peaceable, hard-working and all that. He painted a picture of his version of Dave's tragic murder. It was enough to make a lump come into the throat of the most hardened murderer. I, myself, was ready to burst out in tears. All that sob stuff, you know.

And all the time he was talking Payload got more and more excited. I kept an eye on Farnum, watching to see his reactions to what he was saying. But Farnum was a cool customer; he never batted an eye. If Payload was figuring on tricking Farnum into some damaging break, he was losing out. The deputy sheriff was standing beside Payload, watching the whole proceedings but saying nothing. A good fifty feet away both our ships were idling, the motors turning over so lazily that they sounded like droning flies in the summer time.

"And I told you I'd tell you who the murderer was," finished Payload. "Well, it was my partner, Tex Gainesville," he shouted, pointing at me.

His accusation struck me in the face like a ton of brick. I had been prepared to get the drop on Farnum at the minute Payload should name him. But this—my own partner accusing me of the murder—sent a chill down my spine that paralyzed me like an electric shock.

"Why, you're crazy, Payload," I managed to stammer, "you don't know what you're saying."

"The heck I don't know what I'm saying!" he shouted. Then he reached for his gun.

But I beat him to it. I knew that he was so worked up and off his head that he might start shooting and do his talking later. I had to act quickly.

"Drop it!" I shouted. "All of you, put your hands up!"

I WAVED the gun from one to the other, and I meant business. I had to get out of the mess that my own crazy partner was getting me into, no matter what the cost, and I didn't intend to take chances with any excited men and guns. I'd manage to see Payload later and get it straightened out. I couldn't do a thing with him in his present overwrought condition and I knew it.

"Now you birds stand right where you are," I ordered. "And the first one of you that makes a move will lie down beside that skeleton and feed a few more buzzards."

Then I backed off toward the idling ships, choosing the Standish because I could handle it better than the other one and I knew it had a heavier fuel load. Still keeping the crowd covered, I got in and took off.

I didn't realize until too late that in my excitement I had failed to cripple the other ship, or even disarm the other three men. I was too intent on getting away for the moment, due perhaps to that wild light in Payload's eyes.

Anyway, it was too late now; and I knew that Payload would be after me in a moment. He was. He didn't bring along anybody else; wanted the ship as light as possible to give him additional speed.

Did you ever play ring-around-the-Rosie with a maniac at an altitude of about three thousand feet? Then you have no idea of what I was up against.

Payload was one of the best flyers in any of these United States, and his experience gave him the breaks. I had hardly covered ten miles of the straightest and hardest flying I ever did in my life when he overtook me. He had gained perhaps fifty feet more altitude than I had. And that meant a lot.

When he was right over me he nosed his ship over and I just avoided having a wing sliced off by falling into a nose dive myself. From there on it was dog fight from the word "go." He clung to me, trying to drive me down, as though he were a human leech. There seemed nothing I could do to get him off my tail. He was above and to the rear of me, and right there he clung. And I couldn't shake him loose.

The strange part of it was that he didn't shoot at me. I knew that he was still armed, and the reason for his holding his fire puzzled me for a moment.

Then I figured it out—he wanted to bring me in without killing me. He wanted me alive in his hands, and so was trying to herd me back to the group that we had deserted.

And I was just as intent that I wouldn't face those wild, squinty, gleaming eyes right away. To tell the truth, I always did think discretion was the only important part of valor, and right now all the blood in my veins seemed to be ice water.

We were still chasing each other's tails when I saw that not more than five miles to the east of us was where the break in the desert occurred. On the border of the desert the mountains were only separated from it by a deep gorge that in some places was as wide and as far to the bottom as the Grand Cañon itself. This gave me an idea for escape. And it worked after a fashion.

I manipulated the scramble in such a manner that we were soon maneuvering over the deep cut. I kept it up until I found just what I wanted and was looking for.

At this point the cañon was quite narrow, but more than three hundred feet deep, I judged. Just the place to take the chance I was going to have to take. Of course, it is probable that I could have taken a shot at Payload, but I didn't want to do that.

I kept losing altitude slowly, not fast enough to arouse his suspicions. Soon we were not more than three hundred feet above the level of the desert, but fully six hundred feet above the bottom of the gorge.

STALLING around a little longer, I hauled the parachute straps over my shoulders and managed to wriggle my legs into them and buckle them. It was the usual seat type chute that we used, although we seldom got into the harness.

I was skimming along, doing low figure-of-eights and such. Then I circled back to the spot I had chosen. Suddenly I stood up in my seat and dived head foremost out of the cockpit. Down I went, like a leaden weight. I was slowly turning over and over in the air, but at every revolution my body made I got my bearings.

I was making it all right; I was going to clear the sides of the embankment, headed for the bottom of the gorge.

I found the ripcord with my hand, but didn't open it. Then suddenly the sides of the gorge shot up beside me—I was safe.

Only then did I pull the ripcord ring. The silken chute unfolded above me, and my fall was checked. It was only then that I looked upward for a sign of Payload.

Now I could breathe easily for the space of a minute. I had figured that if I could jump into the gorge, I wouldn't open my chute until I got clear of Payload, knowing that he couldn't follow me into the cañon nor shoot at me with any chance of hitting me. And at the same time, I would still have time enough to get my chute open safely before landing.

But I hadn't counted on the air currents in the cañon. I was always forgetting things, it seemed like. An upstream draft hit me and carried me like a feather toward a bend which narrowed down to about fifty feet across. Trees lined the two sides of the gorge at this point.

It seemed like my luck had deserted me. I heard a rip and felt a jerk that threw me against one of the tree stumps. Then I lost consciousness and knew no more.

When I came to, I was lying on a bed in the dirty room of some shiftless desert man's house. Sitting around the bed were Payload, the deputy sheriff and Farnum.

I tried to get my bearings. I couldn't move my body, and there was an agonizing pain in both my legs. I was trying to lift my head to examine them when Payload spoke.

"Both of your legs are broken," he explained. "And now that you'll likely stay put till you hear the rest of my story, I'll go on with it."

"Have you still got that crazy idea that I killed Sparks?" I managed to ask.

"Yep, I've still got that crazy idea," he answered sternly, "and I'll go on explaining it. The first thing that puzzled me was how the devil Dave happened to be back inland when he had set out to fly westward. Naturally, since he took off long before daylight, he'd have to depend on his compass for direction. So you and I went back to the desert and I examined his compass. You wouldn't get out of the ship that time, you remember.

"I found that the little black band that encircles the magnetized bars had been removed and turned just half way around and replaced. Thus the degree marks were a full hundred and eighty degrees wrong. After he'd circled for altitude and started to set his course by that, he'd naturally steer east instead of west. There was no chance of Sparks getting bearings from any beacons or landmarks because it was foggy the morning of the take-off to Hawaii.

"Now that compass job was done during the night before he took off, because the compass would have been checked the day before the flight. That's regular practice. And the switching was done by an expert—it would have taken a man familiar with that particular make of compass to do the work in so short a time. It's a little-known make. You had been the only one working on it."

I was tossing in the bed with the pain in my body, but I had to defend myself from such charges. They were serious. But I couldn't think of any loophole in his damning circumstantial argument. It sounded so fiendishly convincing.

"THOSE things might be so," I argued desperately, "but that doesn't make me a murderer. You haven't any motive, nor the slightest proof that I changed the compass.

Why, it may never have been reversed —you might have changed it yourself since I've been unconscious."

"No. I took all those witnesses out there to prove to them that the compass was wrong before it was touched. That can be proved by the screw holes in the instrument board. And—"

"But that doesn't prove I did it. And you still have no motive," I retorted.

"Yep! I have that, too. On the day that Sparks disappeared you went to the bank with his check for two hundred dollars. You presented that and fifteen hundred dollars in currency and bought a draft. I am sure that money belonged to Sparks because he owed me money at the time and had promised to pay me with the money that he was to get for the ship that you and he sold. He told me at the time that you were claiming more than your part of it and that he was going to get rid of you as soon as the deal was over and before he made the Hawaii trip. I didn't believe it after I got to know you—but I was wrong in trusting you. Your motive was revenge and robbery."

The pain in my body was unbearable. I begged for a glass of water. None of the three torturers there would get it for me. They were convinced by Payload's arguments, and were trying to break down my resistance, make me put a noose around my neck.

"You are a bunch of crooks," I accused them. "You will let me lie here and suffer, and accuse me of murder."

I was fast losing control. The pain was agonizing and I was famished for water. I knew that I couldn't last much longer. I had to make them believe that Payload was lying or crazy.

"Even with all that," I insisted, "you only have a case of circumstantial evidence. That doesn't prove—"

"Well, if that's not enough we have something that will be. And you pointed it out yourself."

Payload pulled a piece of paper from his pocket and unwrapped the bullet that he had found in the skull, after I had been so unlucky as to discover and point out the bullet hole.

"When we picked you up unconscious down in the gorge," he explained, "I took the liberty of examining your gun. And just to do a little checking up, I fired it into a box of sand. You can tell with the naked eye that the markings on the bullet are the same. If and when the arms expert puts it under a glass, the case against you will be closed."

My head was dizzy—I was going fast.

"All right," I cried. "I killed him —sure. He gypped me out of my share of the money—and I needed money bad right then to keep from going to jail. I changed the compass and then hid in the cockpit, drawing off enough gas to make up for my weight. Then I shot him and robbed him and jumped overboard with a parachute. The ship didn't crash and burn as I expected—otherwise you'd never have caught me. Now give me some water, damn you!"

The above is written from my cell in San Quentin. It is written of my own free will and accord and without hope of reprieve or leniency on its account. My only hope is that as time goes on, the memory of the awful experience will fade enough to allow me to sleep at night without dreams of that grinning skull with the bullet rattling in it.

THE END.

"I want him to know I sent him to the chair!" she screeched

The Legacy of Peril

Trapped, body and soul, in the frame-up engineered by Ollie Harmon, New York's king of racketeers, young Ted Glenn faces a bleak and danger-strewn future

By FRED MacISAAC

Author of "The Man of Gold," "The Wrong Kind of Money," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

TED GLENN, young day clerk in Tom Mullen's haberdashery near Times Square, narrowly escapes death when two gunmen kill a rival gangster, Armstein, in the store; and Mullen is killed by accident. Dying, Mullen urges Ted to work for the conviction of Ollie Harmon, boss racketeer who had ordered Armstein's killing. He gives his executor, Sanford of the Mammoth National, orders to pay Ted $150 a week, and to turn over his fortune of some $85,000 when Harmon is convicted.

Harmon steals Mullen's letter of instructions, and takes Ted away from a

This story began in the Argosy for September 27.

con game under his man Schultz to send him on a New Jersey rum truck. The truck is captured, and Ted is arrested, identified, and then allowed to escape. He returns to New York, and gets a call from Laura Demerest, Harmon's mistress.

CHAPTER XIV.

BETRAYAL.

THE head disappeared but it had identified the apartment. Ted pushed open the door and entered. To his astonishment it was unfurnished save for two or three wooden chairs in the living room. In the middle of the room stood Laura Demerest. Her mouth was grim and her eyes were smoldering. She seemed to be excited.

"Sit down, Mr. Glenn," she said curtly. Turning, she walked to the window and looked out into the street for a moment. When she turned again she was smiling and cordial.

"Nice of you to respond to my cryptic message," she said. "I hope you didn't think I had fallen in love with you and that this was an assignation."

"I didn't flatter myself," he replied frankly. "I'm in a frightful hole. You said you might help me."

Miss Demerest seated herself, crossed her legs, drew out a jeweled cigarette case from her hand bag, lighted it from a black enamel lighter and narrowed her green eyes.

"You have no idea how serious is your situation," she declared. "You probably do not suspect that it was no accident that you were captured on a hooch cart in New Jersey last night."

"I did consider it suspicious," he replied.

"Orders from the top," she said. "Have you asked yourself why Harmon should consider it worth sacrificing a seven or eight thousand dollar load of Scotch to frame you?"

"I suppose he wants to have something on me so that I shall have to be loyal."

"Again you flatter yourself. Your loyalty is worthless to him. You'll never make a successful crook."

He smiled wryly. "I suppose not."

"I'm a pretty good judge of character," she asserted. "I was astonished when you proved to be the man I was supposed to introduce to Mrs. Potter Waring. I would have bet a hundred to one that you were on the level, and I would have been right."

"I'm a criminal now, though," he said sorrowfully.

"Yes. Ollie can send you to Atlanta if he happens to feel like it. You have a good jaw, Glenn, and the eye of a fighter. What are you going to do? Obey orders?"

He made a despairing gesture. "I don't know what to do."

"Still hoping to get the goods on him and send him to the chair?"

Ted turned pale and stared at her.

"Oh, let's get down to cases. Tom Mullen left eighty thousand dollars to you on condition that you send Harmon where he ought to go. Well, Ollie knows all about that."

"He does?" Ted muttered.

"The only reason you aren't a corpse at this minute is that your commission appealed to the weird sense of humor he happens to possess. Ollie thinks it would be funny if he got possession of Mullen's money in view of the kind intentions of its late owner. That Federal gang who nabbed you last night are in the organization and they had orders not to kill you but to capture you. Jiggins was a trimmer

and it was on the cards for him to be shot. He was."

"How do you know all this?" he whispered.

"We'll come to that presently. The next thing on the program is an interview with Harmon in which he will propose to you to claim the legacy upon some phony public service. He will see that the service is performed and you get the credit. You pay him fifty per cent. When you get the money you will have to turn over the other fifty per cent for investment. After that you'll be taken for a ride. Neat scheme, isn't it?"

TED'S eyes were popping. "What a scoundrel he is! However, it won't work. While the will says 'notable public service,' there is a letter of instruction specifying what the service is."

She laughed rudely. "The letter is in Ollie's possession. He got it out of Sanford's vault at the Mammoth Bank. Sanford, as soon as he found that it had been stolen, took fright and left for parts unknown. You needn't worry that the legacy won't be paid if you make a deal with Harmon. Are you going to do it?"

Ted's jaw thrust itself forward. "I am not. Not if he kills me. Tom would turn over in his grave."

"Well, you won't live long if you make the deal. A few weeks or months. Harmon is like an elephant. He never forgets a grudge. Do you still wish to get a conviction against Ollie?"

"More than anything else in life. The money has nothing to do with it now. I hate him. Look what he has done to me already."

"Even if he had not discovered what you were up to, you would not have had a chance. Nothing that happens in New York can be pinned on Ollie. His orders are verbal and are passed on through lieutenants who are all out of jail on his tolerance. He is responsible for scores of killings. I'll tell you something, the biggest banking house in New York has had the best detectives in America on his trail for five years and never turned up a scrap of evidence.

"And if they had him cold they couldn't find a jury in this town to convict him. Ollie is so big that the people who would have to prosecute him would lay down on the job."

"How do you know so much about him?" he asked dispiritedly.

"I know him better than anybody living and I hate him worse."

"Why don't you go to these detectives you speak of?"

"I don't want to wake up strangled. Besides the detectives dare not make a move against him. You are the only man I could talk to like this, because if you don't get Ollie he'll get you, Ted Glenn. So I know I can talk to you."

"I don't see that talking will do us any good under the circumstances."

She threw her cigarette on the floor and stepped on it.

"You consider me a criminal," she declared. "Well, I am. But I hate crime. I'm in the toils just as you are. I'm watched. I'm in danger of death at this minute from the man whom I loved devotedly for years. He has thrown me away like an old shoe. He would have me murdered without compunction if he thought I contemplated betraying him. If he knew that I were here in this vacant apartment with you, he would have me strangled in my bed."

"How could a beautiful woman like you be in love with a man like that?" he marveled.

"I've got a perverse streak in me. I knew he was a criminal when I first met him, but he fascinated me. I admired his courage and cruelty and his craft. I fancied myself as a tigress and I thought he was my mate. Well, he took me and he had no scruples about using me in his schemes. Eight years ago, when I was insane about him, I delighted in serving him any way he wanted me to. For years he has been deceiving me and I was fool enough not to realize it. Until recently he has been alternately fondling me and abusing me, but now he has definitely thrown me over. However, he holds me in his organization and doesn't hesitate to make use of me, as he did in the case of Mrs. Waring. And if I try to break away—curtains."

"No wonder you hate him!"

SHE rose and stretched her hands toward the ceiling. Her fingers curled like claws.

"I want him to fry," she declared furiously. "And I want him to know that I sent him to the chair. That's why I'm going to tell you how to bring it about."

"Then there is a way?" exclaimed Ted.

"A forlorn hope. I've been forbidden to come to his apartment for weeks, and I have evidence that he has been running around with other women—a cat named Doll Dean was the last straw. Yesterday I went to make a last appeal, and he let me in. He was very good-natured, for a change. The notion that a kid like you was out to secure his conviction amused him. He let me read the letter of instructions from Mullen to Sanford and laughed about it. Well, I taxed him with the Doll Dean matter and he became furious and had me ejected from the apartment. That finished everything. You go after him, Glenn, and get him."

"How?" demanded Ted.

"I own this apartment house, and I came over here four or five hours ago. Of course I am watched, but you aren't known and aren't important enough to be shadowed. The man who is hanging out on the sidewalk doesn't know or care what apartment you are visiting. When you leave here don't go back to your hotel. Take a taxi to the Grand Central and buy a ticket to Boston. Change your name on the way. Go to Worcester, Massachusetts, and unobtrusively investigate the murder in 1920 of an old woman named Mary Green. There is no statute of limitations on murder, and she was killed by Ollie Harmon."

Ted stared at her in astonishment.

"It's your only chance," she declared passionately. "You could prove his complicity in ten murders in New York and never bring him to trial, but he has no pull in Massachusetts. The judges over there would sentence Harmon as quickly as they would sentence anybody else. The murder has never been solved because the authorities never learned that Harmon was in Worcester at the time it happened. He was staying at the Hotel Hampshire. You'll find his signature on the register. That's all the help I can give you."

"Why did he kill the woman?"

"For money, of course. She was a client of a partner of his. She kept her fortune in greenbacks hidden in her mattress. Ollie knew it. He took seventy-five thousand dollars and went in for bootlegging in a big way."

"But ten years ago! How can I get the evidence?"

"That's up to you. When you've

got it, write me at an address I'll send you and I'll try to find a way to get Harmon into Massachusetts where he can be nabbed without extradition formalities. He might be strong enough here to prevent extradition from New York State."

"Did he write his own name on the register of the Hotel Hampshire?"

"No, you fool," she said sharply. "He was down as R. R. Rawlins. And the date was around June 1, 1920. Have you any money?"

"Four or five hundred dollars."

"Here's a thousand for expenses. You had better go now. If Harmon sends for you and you fail to show up, he'll close the gates of New York against you."

"I have orders to report to Schultz in the morning."

"Then get out of town right away. Take this money. You'll need it. I'm a rich woman, though the money does me no good."

"I wonder," said Ted thoughtfully, "how far you will really go. If you still love this fellow, you can't want him electrocuted."

"There is nothing I want so much in life. I hate him. That's reason enough, but his death will set me at liberty. And you needn't worry about your safety if you convict Harmon. He rules by fear. Every man in his organization will be delighted when he is gone and will breathe freely for the first time in years."

"Isn't there anything else you can tell me? How do you know this much?"

"Ten years ago he was mad about me, and he would tell me everything when he had too much to drink. But that's all I know. It's the only crime he ever perpetrated with his own hands. Good-by, Mr. Glenn. Harmon will be after you, of course, but he won't put the Federal men on you. Your conviction would end his prospects of laying hands on Mullen's money through your instrumentality. And another thing. He concentrates on New York and Washington. I don't think he can do much in Massachusetts."

"Are you sure I am not watched?"

"How do I know?" she asked impatiently. "I don't think so, as I told you. If you get out of New York you're not. He likes to nab 'em at the station."

"Well, good-by, and thank you."

With some hesitation he held out his hand.

"Don't thank me," she answered roughly. "To me you're nothing but an instrument, and probably not a good one. Good-by."

HE left her, a tremendously beautiful woman, in that vacant room, like a diamond out of its setting. Once in the street he looked furtively up and down. The fear of the hunted was on him. A taxi turned the corner, rattled along, and he stopped it.

"Grand Central," he told the driver. He looked at his watch. It was four forty-five. He knew there were several trains for Boston at five, but he doubted if the taxi could get through traffic in time. He thought that one of these trains stopped at 125th Street. He changed the directions to the chauffeur.

Ted arrived on the platform at 125th Street just as the Boston train was entering the station. He bought a seat in a chair car from the conductor on the train and awaited its departure with trepidation.

But the train pulled out without a

hand falling upon the shoulder of Ted Glenn. A new phase of his adventure was about to begin.

One of the statements of Laura Demerest had heartened him greatly. Ollie would not be likely to set the Federal officers on his trail. It appeared that the brute had a sense of humor, and the notion of appropriating the fortune of poor Tom Mullen appealed to him.

The business ahead of him seemed hopeless. With no police experience Ted was to pick up a scent ten years old. Everybody who knew anything about the Green case was apt to be dead or departed for parts unknown. How was he even to begin such a search?

Well, he could get at the files of the Worcester papers ten years back and learn all the details of the crime; in the news columns he would find the names of most of the persons who were able to testify in connection with it.

He had a tremendous advantage over the Worcester police and detectives who had investigated the affair a decade ago. He knew the murderer and where he was to be found, and he knew the motive. All he had to do was to prove opportunity and action. While this would be difficult, perhaps it would not be impossible.

Ollie Harmon, the Achilles of crime had a vulnerable heel like his Greek prototype. And he had made the mistake of permitting a woman to learn many of his secrets before he cast her off.

Laura was beautiful, but Ted thought that she was an exceedingly dangerous woman. She was wildly passionate, utterly without principle, and could hate as hard as she had loved. She wanted Harmon punished for his crimes, not because he was a criminal, but because he didn't love her any more. Just now she was very much in earnest, but she might weaken if Harmon went back to her and asked to be forgiven. And if she made up with Ollie, about the first thing she would do would be to betray the whereabouts of Ted Glenn and the work he was about.

From the single interview he had had with Ollie Harmon, Ted doubted very much whether the man would resume relations with the Demerest woman. At least he wouldn't be apt to do it very soon. If Glenn were fortunate enough to get what he wanted in two or three weeks, Laura probably would still be revengeful enough to do her part in trapping Harmon. After that he couldn't depend upon her. Her fury might cool, and she might wheedle herself back into the scoundrel's good graces.

For the first time since he had permitted sympathy for a dying man and a young man's thirst for big money to commit him to a desperate enterprise, Ted saw a path opening up which seemed to lead toward his goal. His spirits rose as the train clicked off the miles and the State of New York was left behind and he entered the State of Connecticut.

CHAPTER XV.

DOMESTIC FIREWORKS.

THE Sleeper family were at dinner on the evening of the day when Ted Glenn shook the dust of New York from his feet. Mr. Sleeper, in vest and shirt sleeves, honed his carving knife with the deftness of long experience while the family eyed the pot roast expectantly. Mr. Sleeper ran his

eye around the table and observed one vacant chair.

"Where is Sally?" he demanded.

"Working late, I suppose," said Nan. "No need to wait for her."

"Did she phone home she was going to be late?" demanded the head of the house.

"No," admitted Mrs. Sleeper.

"Well, I'm not going to stand for this kind of stuff," he stated.

"Aw, cut the meat, dad," pleaded Billy. "Sal probably got caught in the subway rush."

"Yeah?" he retorted, transfixing his youngest son with a glare. "Did I get caught in the subway rush? Don't I have to board the train at Canal Street?"

The outer door slammed, there were rapid footsteps in the hall and Sally entered the dining room.

"Evening, folks," she said without her customary smile. "Sorry to be late."

She tossed her hat and coat upon a chair in the living room and hastened to seat herself.

Mr. Sleeper rested the hilt of knife and fork upon the tablecloth and frowned.

"Now look here, young woman," he began. "What's the meaning of this? The least you can do is to be home in time for dinner or, if you can't make it, you're supposed to telephone. Your brothers and sisters are here—"

"Oh, dad, dry up," snapped Nan. "Can't you see the kid doesn't feel good? What's the matter, honey—get fired from your job?"

"No," said Sally in a low tone. "Not that."

"Well," remarked Mr. Sleeper, "if she don't feel good, all right. Pass your plate, Sally."

Dinner proceeded without talk for ten minutes while the pot roast was being consumed. When the plates were cleared and Mrs. Sleeper rose to fetch in the pie from the kitchen, Dick Sleeper took the floor.

"Seeing much of Ted Glenn lately, Sally?" he asked guilefully.

"None of your business," she snapped.

"That's no way to answer your brother," chided Mr. Sleeper. "I thought I told you to bring that feller home and let me have a look at him?"

"I haven't seen him for several days," she admitted. "Change the subject, can't you?"

"Ahem!" This was a fake cough from Dick. "You people remember a lot of nasty cracks from Sal when I told her not long ago that this Glenn was a bum. Well, I know a rat when I see him and here's the evidence."

He drew from his pocket a ragged piece of paper torn from an evening paper and proceeded to read the item which Ted had come across in the subway some hours earlier.

Sally's eyes darkened, she paled and she drooped like a lily while Dick declaimed the damning article.

"A dirty bootlegger, that's what he is," he commented when he had finished. "That's the egg that Sally was running around with. That's the fellow she wanted to beat me up. Well, he'll go to Atlanta for a stretch and you're going to be lucky, dad, if she isn't dragged into the trial."

His malice-filled eyes rested upon his half-fainting sister. The effect of the newspaper item upon the family was even greater than he had anticipated.

Thomas Sleeper pushed back his chair and rose to his full height of five feet five.

"So," he thundered. "A rum-runner, hey! My daughter mixed up with

a murderous bootlegger! It's about time that there was discipline applied in this family—"

"Aw, dad, Sal didn't know he was a bootlegger," protested Billy.

"Of course she didn't," exclaimed Nan. "Don't talk to her now. Can't you see that she's feeling dreadful?"

"And she ought to feel dreadful," declared Mrs. Sleeper. "I can't believe it. My daughter that I brought up so carefully!"

Mr. Sleeper silenced her. "We gave you every advantage and we've provided a good home with Christian influences," he shouted. "And what do you do? You pass up honest young men and spend your nights with a bootlegger. How do I know how you've been behaving with this gunman? How do I know you are still a good girl—"

SALLY rose from the table. "That will be about all from the lot of you," she said in a low tense voice. "For three years I've been earning my own living and helping to support this fine Christian home. So long as I paid board you asked no questions and how I have been behaving has never interested you before. You throw a young girl out on her own resources just as soon as she is old enough to make money and then pull the heavy father stuff and grand stand all over the place when a thing like this turns up. If you don't know that I'm a good girl, if you have no confidence in your own daughter, you can believe what you like. I didn't know Ted Glenn was a rum-runner and, despite that piece that Dick so kindly read to us, I don't believe it yet."

"You'll believe it when they summon you as a witness," said Dick with a mean laugh.

"I won't believe he is guilty," she retorted. "I've stuck to this family through thick and thin and the first time I find myself in trouble you all turn on me—that is, mother and father and Dick turn on me. All right, I'm through with you. I through with this whole sordid, bickering household. I'm old enough to do as I please and I please to walk out of here. Good night."

She was trembling with hysteria as she ran into her bedroom. Mrs. Sleeper began to whimper and Mr. Sleeper looked nonplused.

"You've driven her out of the house," Nan charged angrily. "I've a darned good mind to go with her."

"I've got to do my duty," said Mr. Sleeper defensively. "I find my daughter consorting with a rum-runner that's going to be sent to Atlanta. I should say nothing, I suppose. As for you—" He turned on Dick. "You had no business reading that piece of paper at the table. You should have come to me privately with it."

"She needed taking down," declared Dick, "so I took her down plenty."

"You—you're just rotten," spluttered Nan who left her unfinished dinner and followed Sally into her room. The older sister, tears streaming down her cheeks, was throwing garments into two open suitcases.

"You're not going, really?" asked Nan. "Darling, don't go. I don't want to be left here alone with them."

"Got to," replied Sally. "I've stood enough. A girl who works hard all day has a right to peace and pleasant surroundings when she comes home. I'd rather be all alone in a furnished room than to put up with this any longer."

"Maybe this isn't your Ted Glenn, dear."

"It is," said Sally, choking a sob. "He comes from Freehold. And he's been acting queer ever since he lost his

job with the haberdasher. Out of work and flashing money and new clothes. I saw him talking to a bootlegger who used to deliver to old Appleton and he handed me a lot of boloney about that and I believed him. I—I guess I was stuck on Ted, all right."

Nan looked at her sympathetically. She could think of nothing to say.

"He *is* nice, at bottom," declared Sally. "It's just this rotten old New York that got him. I—I suppose they'll send him to prison."

"Of course I know you were just friends," asserted Nan. "It was horrid of father to make that insinuation."

"A lot he cares what becomes of me. He was putting on an act for the benefit of the family. Well, he'll never set eyes on me again."

"Where are you going?" asked Nan, weeping from sympathy.

"I'm going to get out of New York. I've got to find out what happens to Ted and after they send him away I'm going far off somewhere. I'll write to you, Nan."

"I wish I could go with you."

"You marry Jack. He's an honest boy if he doesn't make much money. There! I've got all the stuff I want to take. You can have the rest of my things."

SHE snapped her suitcases shut, donned her hat and coat, embraced Nan, kissed her on the cheek, flung open her door, which opened off the living room and found the family assembled outside. Mrs. Sleeper emitted a wail of protest when she saw her daughter actually about to depart. Mr. Sleeper removed the pipe from his mouth and rose from his easy chair. Billy and Dick were interested spectators.

"You go back in that room, take off your things and unpack your bags," commanded Mr. Sleeper. "I done my duty in speaking as I did, but maybe I went too far."

"Sally, your father apologized. Now you do as he says," pleaded her mother.

Sally met her mother's eyes sadly. It was hard to love a spineless and melancholy creature like her mother and for years she had had only tolerant contempt for her father.

"It's too late," she declared. "You don't have to worry about me, mother, because I can take care of myself."

"Oh, yeah?" sneered Dick.

"I'm not addressing you," she snapped.

Mr. Sleeper decided to try a little thunder. "You do what I said," he shouted. "I forbid you to leave this flat. Do you hear?"

"How are you going to stop me?" she demanded. "If you put Dick to work and make him pay board you'll get along all right without me. I'm leaving."

Her father barred her path.

"Don't you dare go. If you leave your home, you can never come back," he threatened. "I cast you off. I'm through with you forever."

It was a dramatic scene and he did it very well for an elderly shipping clerk.

"Nevertheless," retorted Sally, who stooped under his outstretched arms, ran into the hall, dropped a suitcase, opened the outside door and was free.

She walked down four flights of stairs, hailed a cab and went to a small cheap hotel in the neighborhood where she got a room for the night.

She was through with Ted Glenn forever. How could a man with eyes as clear and fine as his be a crook? Well, she was through with him and New York.

She had saved a little money, about a hundred and seventy-five dollars. She would find some kind of job which took her out of town and begin life anew, far from the Sleeper family and memories of Ted. She went to bed and cried for hours.

In the morning she phoned her office that she was not coming in and took a train for New Brunswick. Sally was through with Ted Glenn, of course, but he lay friendless in a jail, and if she could see him, he might explain things somehow. There might be something that she could do for him.

The trip was fruitless. The police informed her that Glenn had been taken to New York by the Revenue officials for questioning.

She returned to New York and visited Prohibition headquarters where she learned that Glenn had escaped from the officer who was escorting him to the big city and was now a fugitive from justice.

That ended things for Sally. She couldn't go back to the dull routine of a real estate office with her nerves jangling. She wanted change and action and excitement. She found it with a crew of demonstrators of a new vibrator; signed up for a small salary, expenses and commission and began work the following Monday morning in New Haven.

CHAPTER XVI.

FERRETING INTO AN OLD CRIME.

AS Mr. Arthur Ross, Ted Glenn arrived in Worcester and secured a two-dollar room and bath at the old Hampshire Hotel. He had hit upon an explanation of his interest in the ancient murder case. He was a novelist looking for plot and human interest, and he often found them in unsolved mysteries. To lend color to his tale he rented a typewriter and placed it in his chamber.

The Hampshire Hotel was a down-at-the-heel caravansary which had not paid expenses since prohibition, but it occupied a valuable site in down town Worcester and its owners were operating it to help pay the taxes. Some day they would sell the land at a high price and an office building would go up in place of the ramshackle hotel.

There was a day clerk and a night clerk, and several colored bellboys. The restaurant had long since been discontinued and the old dining room had been converted into a one-arm lunch emporium.

Ted began his work by visiting the office of the Worcester *Telegram* and asking to see the files for 1920. He turned to the month of June, but found no reference to the crime until he arrived at the edition of June 16, when it was spread over the front page.

It seemed that Mary Green had been choked to death upon the night of June 14 and the body was discovered by a cleaning woman who came next day to scrub floors and walls and wash windows.

Mary Green was a widow about sixty-five years old. Her husband had been a contractor who had accumulated a small fortune and invested it in stocks and bonds. Mrs. Green did not believe in the stability of securities and she had lost money many years before in the failure of a savings bank, so she had no faith in banks.

As her husband had left his money to her without provisions of any sort and named her as executor, she was able to sell everything and convert it into cash. She accumulated seventy-eight thousand dollars in this way and

she estimated that by spending no more than two thousand, five hundred dollars per year she could live to be a hundred without fear of poverty.

Her capital she hid in the house. As her mattress was cut open, the authorities assumed that she must have secreted it there, since a search of the house revealed not a penny.

She lived alone in a large frame house on Ash Street, in a high-class residential district. She employed no servant, but cooked and took care of her house with her own hands. Once a week she had the cleaning woman in to do the heavy work. She appeared to have been a simple, sweet, rather stupid old lady whose only recreation was a film theater once a week and a bridge party about once every two weeks. She had a number of friends, elderly couples, and she had entertained them at dinner and bridge a week before her death.

The police declared that the motive of the crime was robbery and that they had several important clews.

Ted followed the case with great care. Upon June 17 there was a brief follow-up upon the murder. Detective Sergeant Murphy was in charge of the case and an arrest was near. The issues of June 18, 19 and 20 contained no reference to the Green murder. Upon June 21, an individual named Tom Rush was arrested and charged with the murder. Upon June 22 it was reported that he had been released, having proved to the satisfaction of the police that he was in Boston upon the night of the murder.

After that nothing happened and the Green case disappeared from the newspapers. Ted plodded stubbornly through the files until January 1 and learned nothing. On October 1, the Green case had been cited with two others by an editorial writer as a mystery which had baffled the police.

WITH a sigh he returned the files to the office manager and left the newspaper plant. He walked across to the Common, directly opposite, and seated himself on a bench. It was a lovely day of early summer. There were many occupants of benches and throngs of people crossing the park. There was a honking of motor horns and the clanging of the gongs of strings of trolley cars.

He had jotted down the names of persons mentioned in the newspaper in connection with the case, and one of them was Henry Taylor, cashier of the Worcester Trust Company. Mr. Taylor had stated that he had protested to Mrs. Green against drawing her cash out of the bank, and told her that she not only lost interest thereby, but ran a chance of being robbed and murdered if it became known that she kept her money in her house.

He saw the sign of the trust company over on Main Street, and decided to call on Mr. Taylor first.

"Is Mr. Taylor still connected with this bank?" he asked at the first wicket.

"Sure is," replied the young man heartily. "President, no less."

"May I see him?"

"Certainly. Just right face. There he is at the desk next to the front window. Go right in. The president meets all callers."

Ted lifted a gate in the railing and approached the president.

"My name is Arthur Ross," he said. "May I have a minute of your time, Mr. Taylor?"

"That's what I am here for," replied the president cordially. He was a small, bald man with a round red face, a frank smile and clear blue eyes.

Ted dropped into the chair he indicated. "I am a writer, sir," he said, "and I am particularly interested in murder mysteries. I wanted to ask you something about the case of Mary Green. You knew her, I believe."

"That's pretty ancient history, young man," said the president with a smile. "I read a lot of detective stories, but I certainly wouldn't think there was much chance for a writer in that."

"It's the apparent hopelessness of the thing which intrigues me."

"There was a foolish old woman," said Taylor. "She lived in a detached house in a suburb. She had about seventy or eighty thousand in cash hidden in the house. If I remember correctly it was stuffed into her mattress, the first place a burglar would look. We had done a certain amount of business with her late husband. I believe I personally sold him some bonds, and he carried a checking and savings account with us. Mrs. Green told me she was going to turn everything into cash. She said she didn't need interest because there was money enough to last her lifetime, and she had no heirs. I protested, but she overruled me, and I sold her securities for her and gave her cash for them."

"Then you handled the whole transaction."

"Yes—no, not all. There was a big mortgage on a building in New York City. A lawyer friend of her husband's had placed it for her, and she wanted it sold. I wrote to this lawyer who put the deal through and sent me a check for eleven thousand. I cashed it and the old lady put the money in her hand bag."

"You don't happen to remember this lawyer's name?" asked Ted.

"No, I don't. It was ten years ago. I remember he protested against the sale, and I explained by letter that Mrs. Green trusted only in cold cash. He had to sell it at a fair-sized discount."

"You wouldn't have that letter, I suppose?"

"Why, I think I have. It's probably in one of my old letter files. I am methodical and never throw anything away. But what do you want it for? As a writer—"

"I want to see everybody connected in any degree with Mrs. Green. I'm only after material, but I suppose it wouldn't be the first time that a writer happened to solve a mystery."

"That would have been in March or April, 1920." He turned toward a stenographer. "Miss Smith, see if you can find my letter file for 1920."

After five minutes' search in the record room the girl returned and laid it upon his desk. Mr. Taylor ran his eye swiftly through the contents and lit upon the letter.

"Here you are," he said triumphantly. "Robert Shopiro —— Cedar Street, New York City. Never know when an old letter will come in handy."

TED made a note of the name and address.

"It was curious that they never found a clew, wasn't it?" he said.

"Oh, they found a lot of clews, but nobody to pin them on. That's always the way. As I remember the case, nobody in the neighborhood saw anybody who looked suspicious. No strange crooks were observed by the police to be in town. They sweated what we call the underworld in Worcester, and finally arrested some shady character, but they had to let him go because he proved his innocence. Little cities like

this are very peaceful, and when a crime is committed the police haven't a large array of known criminals to drag in and frighten into a confession. Well, Mr. Ross, there is a man there waiting to see me. Anything else I can do for you?"

"I'm greatly obliged. I guess that's all, Mr. Taylor."

"Well, when you have solved the mystery come in and tell me about it," said the bank president. "Good morning."

Ted went out of the bank and back to his bench on the Common. He was a little excited for what the banker had told him fitted with the statement of Laura Demerest.

This New York lawyer would be a friend of Harmon's. Most likely, in explaining the sacrifice of a good mortgage, Taylor had written him that Mrs. Green was eccentric, and was turning everything into cash. If Shopiro was crooked that would be tip enough for him to make inquiries and discover that the old lady had seventy or eighty thousand dollars hidden in her home.

Harmon at that moment had probably been in desperate need of money, and this must have looked like an easy way to get it. He learned all the facts from Shopiro, and made a trip to Worcester, where he went to the Hampshire Hotel and registered under an assumed name.

Worcester had a population of a hundred thousand in 1920; too big a city for a prosperous-looking stranger to attract any attention. There were at the hotels probably a thousand persons who arrived a day or two before the murder and checked out within a few days afterward.

Ted realized how everything worked for Ollie Harmon. A woman living alone in her isolated house, her fortune all in currency and lying in the mattress upon which she slept. A town in which Harmon was unknown—probably he had never been there before or since.

He could have walked from his hotel while the streets were crowded and attracted no attention as he proceeded up Ash Street. People do not sit looking out the windows of quiet suburban streets in a prosperous neighborhood, and most residents not down town at a theater were apt to retire about ten o'clock. The newspaper reported that the medical examiner thought that Mrs. Green had been dead from ten to twelve hours when her body was discovered by the cleaning woman at ten o'clock the following day.

Harmon had the means for easy entrance. The paper stated that all windows were closed and locked, and there was no evidence of breaking in. Most likely he had a set of keys, one of which fitted the front door.

Knowing how cold-blooded the man was, Ted thought it likely he waked the old woman up, forced her to tell where her money was hidden, and then strangled her so that she could not identify him. He had long, slim fingers that looked strong as steel.

With the money in his pocket he had walked out of the house unperturbed by his crime, returned to his hotel, went to bed and slept soundly, and next day checked out and took a train for New York.

The local police assumed the killing was the work of a yeggman or a second story worker, probably a Worcester crook or somebody who came down from Boston only forty-five miles away. He thought it very unlikely that they had ever learned that a lawyer in New York knew that Mrs.

Green kept a fortune in cash in her home.

Harmon was perfectly safe. Why had he babbled in his drink about his perfect crime? Well, Laura was a fellow-criminal and he was in love with her. He considered she was bound to him by ties that she could never break. He might have succumbed to a mood which many men experience, a desire to show a woman how clever her man is. Perhaps he did not remember having confessed to her and years had passed without the matter being mentioned between them again. Yet Laura had stored it up, womanlike, for future use if she ever had need.

EVEN so, Ted was forced to admit, Harmon was about as safe as he ever had been. Laura was the only witness that he had visited Worcester at the time of the murder, and she wouldn't dare to testify. Shopiro might be forced to admit that he had told Harmon about Mrs. Green, but, in view of Ollie's power in New York, that was unlikely.

Ted rose and crossed the Common to another hotel where he secured a New York telephone book and looked up Shopiro's address. He was a member of the firm of Harmon, Shopiro and Jenkel. Still a partner of Ollie's and deep in racketeering and crime with him!

Ted spent several days running down other persons mentioned in the old newspapers. Most of them could not be located. The cleaning woman was dead. Those he found could tell him little or nothing. The medical examiner of 1920 had been in his grave for eight years. The police detective in charge of the case had been pensioned and was living in the town of Franklyn, some distance away.

The amateur investigator decided that he was fortunate in finding the detective who had handled the affair, an old man living in a village on a pension. If he were an officer in active service he might resent a youth bent upon digging up a buried failure and would dispose of him curtly, but the veteran on the shelf would be glad of a visitor and delighted to get a chance to talk over old times. Ted secured the address of Sergeant Dennis Murphy from police headquarters, and set out the following day for the town of Franklyn.

Disappointment. He found the residence of Sergeant Murphy, but the old man was visiting a married son in the Berkshires.

"He'll be home—let's see, this is Thursday—he'll be back Monday or Tuesday," said the plump middle-aged woman who admitted to being Sergeant Murphy's daughter. "I'm sure he will be glad to talk to you about his days of active service. Father is sixty-eight and he doesn't do a thing all day long but sit on the porch and smoke his pipe or play a little pool down in the village in the evenings. He's been visiting Pat, my brother, for two weeks now and that's about as long as Pat's wife will stand for his getting her curtains full of tobacco smoke."

"I'll call again on Tuesday," Ted assured her.

"It's too bad you had your trip down from Worcester for nothing."

"Oh, that's all right."

He arrived in Worcester about five in the afternoon. It is necessary to descend a flight of stairs from the railroad tracks to a tunnel which leads into the railroad station and Ted was walking through this tunnel when a party of young women descended from a track above and crowded into it. He

stopped perforce, and gazed astonished at the lovely profile of Sally Sleeper.

"Sally!" he gasped.

THE girl was carrying a suitcase in each hand. At the sound of his voice she started, trembled, turned and dropped both her bags.

She gazed at him as though she were looking at a ghost and tears welled into her great eyes.

"Sally!" he repeated. "To think of meeting you!"

The other girls looked curious, then moved on politely. Sally's eyes began to snap and two red spots painted themselves upon her cheeks. Her fine little head reared and her mouth grew stern.

"How dare you speak to me?" she said in a low angry voice. "You, being what you are—a liar, a gangster, a murderer perhaps!"

Ted grew white and his mouth twitched piteously.

"You know — you heard about that?" he stammered.

"Everybody has heard about it," she retorted. "Don't ever speak to me again. Good-by."

She turned away.

"I don't blame you," he said with a voice which broke. "But it isn't as bad as you think, Sally."

"You're lucky I don't call an officer and give you in charge," she tossed at him over her shoulder.

"Do so," he cried wildly. "If that's the way you feel, have me arrested. I don't care what happens to me."

She had stooped to pick up her suitcases and she dropped them again and turned to him.

"Oh, Ted, how could you!" she exclaimed. "Of course I wouldn't give you away."

"May I carry your suitcases into the station?" he asked humbly. "I won't steal them, Sally."

Sally swallowed a sob and surrendered. "Take them," she said. "Of course you wouldn't."

He picked them up and walked for a few yards beside her in the tunnel without either speaking.

"I'm surprised to find you in Worcester," he said banally.

"I couldn't stand it at home. My brother Dick read that piece about you to the family. My father made a scene and I ran out on them. I happened to hear of a crew of girls starting out to demonstrate a vibrator through New England. We've worked New Haven, Hartford, Springfield, and we'll be here for three days and then go on to Boston."

"So I'm responsible for your losing your home," he said sadly.

"It wasn't much of a home and I ought to have pulled out long ago. That doesn't matter. It is what has happened to you."

Ted swallowed a lump in his throat and made a decision. No matter what happened he had to square himself with Sally.

"Can you sit with me a few minutes in the waiting room?" he asked. "I can't go on letting you think that I'm a crook and a gangster. I ought to have told you long ago, but I was afraid you would try to stop me from going on."

Sally threw a penetrating glance at him and immediately softened.

"If you can explain what I have found out about you," she said with a pathetic touch of her old pertness, "you're wonderful. I'm willing to give you a chance."

He led her to a deserted corner of the big waiting room and poured into her astonished ears the total of his Odyssey. He talked steadily for ten

minutes, and at the end her hand had stolen into his and her eyes were shining.

"NOW do you still despise me?" he asked eagerly.

"It's the craziest yarn I ever heard," she declared. "Of course I believe you, Ted. Somehow I never could believe that you were bad at heart. Only I am afraid you are an awful fool."

"Don't I know that?"

"I think Tom Mullen was insane and Mr. Sanford didn't have much sense to agree to be his executor and you were an idiot to consent to the thing. What chance did you have? If you had only confessed everything to me that night I asked you point-blank how you were making a living, I would have forced you to give up before you attracted that fiend's attention to yourself."

"I knew how you would look at it, but I kept thinking of the eighty thousand dollars."

"What good is money if you are dead?" she demanded shrewdly. "Now look at the fix you are in. Sooner or later he will find out where you are and if he doesn't the government will. Oh, Ted, I could cry, I'm so sorry for you. I'll tell you something. I went down to New Brunswick the day after you were taken there to see if I could do anything for you."

"You did? What a darling you are!"

"I couldn't help it. I had to believe you were a gangster, but if you were in trouble I wanted to help you."

"If I ever get out of this fix, Sally—" he began.

"The first thing to do is to leave Worcester," she declared. "Harmon will learn that you are here. That woman will tell him everything. She couldn't hate him so much if she didn't love him. I'm a woman and I know."

"But don't you see? It's my only chance. Why, if I can convict him of this crime, all my troubles are over."

"You are to notify her when you have the goods on him and she'll get him into Massachusetts? Don't believe that. She'll use the information to get into his good graces again and he'll send gunmen after you. Is she prettier than I am, Ted?"

"She's not fit to clean your shoes, Sally."

"From what you tell me you haven't got a thing on him and you won't get anything," she said sagely. "Go up to Canada, Ted, and get a job. Forget the eighty thousand dollars. It will never be your money. And I'll come up to Canada as soon as this job is over and find something to do. They say Montreal is a lovely city."

"I suppose you are right, dear," he agreed.

"I've heard of this Ollie Harmon," she added. "He used to call Roscoe Appleton on the phone sometimes and give him orders. I suppose Appleton was one of his gang."

"He has his finger in every pie in New York."

"And you were stupid enough to think you might convict a man like that," she said with fond scorn. "Will you leave for Canada to-night, Ted?"

He hesitated. Sally was a mine of common sense, but Ted Glenn had a stubborn streak and he hated Ollie Harmon, and there was more than eighty thousand at stake now. Harmon had besmirched his name, dishonored him and made him a fugitive. Harmon sat in his office and laughed at him contemptuously. Harmon was his mortal enemy and Ted was a born fighter.

"No," he said finally. "While there is a remote chance here I'm going to stick. There is one man I've got to see, and if he can't help me, I'll give up."

"When will you see him?"

"Next Tuesday."

"Will you promise to be very careful until then?" she pleaded. "And if you get no help from this man will you go to Montreal?"

"I promise," he declared.

"Well, that's something. You have no idea how happy I feel, Ted. I don't like this work. The vibrator is no good and we only sell it by the meanest kind of misrepresentation. I'm fed up with it and I'm going to leave them here in Worcester. Maybe I can get a job here."

"It will be great if we can spend some time together," he exulted.

"I guess I can manage to find a little time for you," she said fondly. "You certainly need a guardian. I've got to go now. We're stopping at a dump called the Hampshire Hotel. Worst hotel in town, no doubt. The girls will be wondering what has become of me."

"I'll go along with you," he declared. "I happen to be stopping there myself. Registered as Arthur Ross."

"An alias," she sighed. "Well, I suppose it's necessary. Come on."

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW UNDERWORLD QUEEN.

WITH many great enterprises to occupy his time, Ollie Harmon devoted some of it to the case of Theodore Glenn. As Laura had informed Ted, it appealed to his bitter humor and his sense of power to appropriate the little fortune which Tom Mullen had bequeathed to the man who should send the arch-criminal to the electric chair.

Harmon dealt in millions nowadays, but he would deposit Mullen's eighty thousand to his account with more satisfaction than a million in cash secured from bootlegging or racketeering.

It was necessary, to gain his end, to make use of Theodore Glenn and he had taken steps to place Glenn in a position where he would have to obey orders. As Laura had revealed to Ted, his capture was arranged in advance and also his release. There was no danger of government action in his case because if Glenn had a conviction against him it would be hard to convince a court that a criminal could perform a public service worthy of inheriting the Mullen fortune.

When Glenn returned to New York he was branded with the mark of Ollie Harmon and the chief, knowing the goal at which the young man was aiming, had no expectation that he would take to flight.

It was not until he was informed by Schultz that Glenn had failed to report upon the day following his release that Harmon realized that his victim had made a get-away.

"Find out where he went and bring him back," he instructed and turned his attention to other matters. He sent cables to Europe to watch Sanford, for the departure of that alarmed banker on the Paris was easily traced since he had been forced to present his passport to the steamship company. Sanford would be easy to handle when the time came. And, after Glenn had served his purpose, Mr. Harmon would arrange punishment for his temerity.

Regarding Laura Demerest he was a trifle uneasy, for Laura was a strong and passionate character who would bitterly resent her dismissal. Harmon

would have thrown her over years before except that her beauty made her exceedingly useful in his business, but her exactions lately had brought things to a show-down. He was temporarily infatuated with Doll Dean, who had been the *fiancée* of Louis Armstein. It amused him to possess the woman his enemy had loved, and her cold, hard, savage disposition intrigued him.

He had encountered Doll at a night club the evening after she had made the acquaintance of Ted Glenn. He was pleased that she seemed to bear no malice for his elimination of Louis, and her attitude toward himself, which began by being friendly, ended that evening by being exceedingly affectionate.

Harmon was considering installing her in the niche hitherto occupied by Laura Demerest and the scene which Laura made in his office decided him. The word went forth that Laura was through. She was warned of dire consequences if she did not accept the edict, and a watch was put on her to make sure that she behaved herself.

How Laura set about her revenge, how she deceived the trailers and met Ted Glenn in an unfurnished apartment and revealed to him the only hope of reaching Harmon, has already been told. For once the organization fell down.

Harmon was not informed that Laura had met Glenn, but a small army was hunting for Glenn and in a few days made some progress.

Glenn, it was reported, was very friendly with a stenographer named Sally Sleeper. This young woman went to New Brunswick the day after Ted's incarceration, and finding him removed, had visited Prohibition headquarters in New York.

It happened that the person there of whom she made inquiries was a tool of Ollie Harmon, and a report of the visit was in his hands within a few hours.

"HE'LL communicate with the girl. These fools always do," Harmon said to his secretary. "Get busy incorporating a Society to Eliminate Billboards within the city limits. Make Glenn president. We'll shake down the billboard people, pass an ordinance prohibiting them in residential sections where they are no good anyway, and force Sanford to turn over the Mullen money."

"Supposing we can't locate Glenn?"

"Suppose nothing. If our own people fail, I'll get the police to send out a nation-wide request for his arrest on some phony charge that we'll squelch when they bring him in. We'll have him in a couple of weeks."

The telephone rang.

"Miss Dean on the line," Hertz said.

Harmon's face lit up. He spoke into his telephone.

"Good morning, Sunshine," he declared. "I was just thinking of you. If you hadn't called I should have phoned you in a few minutes."

"Shall I hold open the evening for you?" asked the young woman.

"You bet. I'll be up for you at seven. Have you found an apartment you liked yet?... Why, the sky's the limit. Anything you like suits me... Of course I'm wonderful... Certainly it was lucky I dropped in at the Europe Club. Lucky for me. Lucky for both of us... Good-by, darling—or rather, *au revoir.*"

"It's none of my business, boss," said Jack Hertz, "but the dames are your one weakness. How do you know she isn't out to get even for scragging Armstein?"

"Jack," said Harmon tolerantly, "Doll is hard as nails. She put up with Louis while he gave her plenty jack. She knows who is the works in this town and she knows that she can't double cross me. I don't care whether she loves me or not. She happens to appeal to me and she'll be good as long as I give her what she wants. I'm sick of mushy women who sob and make scenes. This little gold-digger amuses me. When she doesn't, I'll write her a big check and give her the gate. She was down and out when I picked her up and now she's on Easy Street. This kind of woman is like a cat."

"Well, I thought it was sort of funny that Armstein's girl should suddenly make a play for you."

"She was through with Armstein months before he was killed. She hated him because he took his presents back. Now do your work and mind your own business."

"I'm through," said Jack with affected resignation.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

"Thief" Ants of Mexico

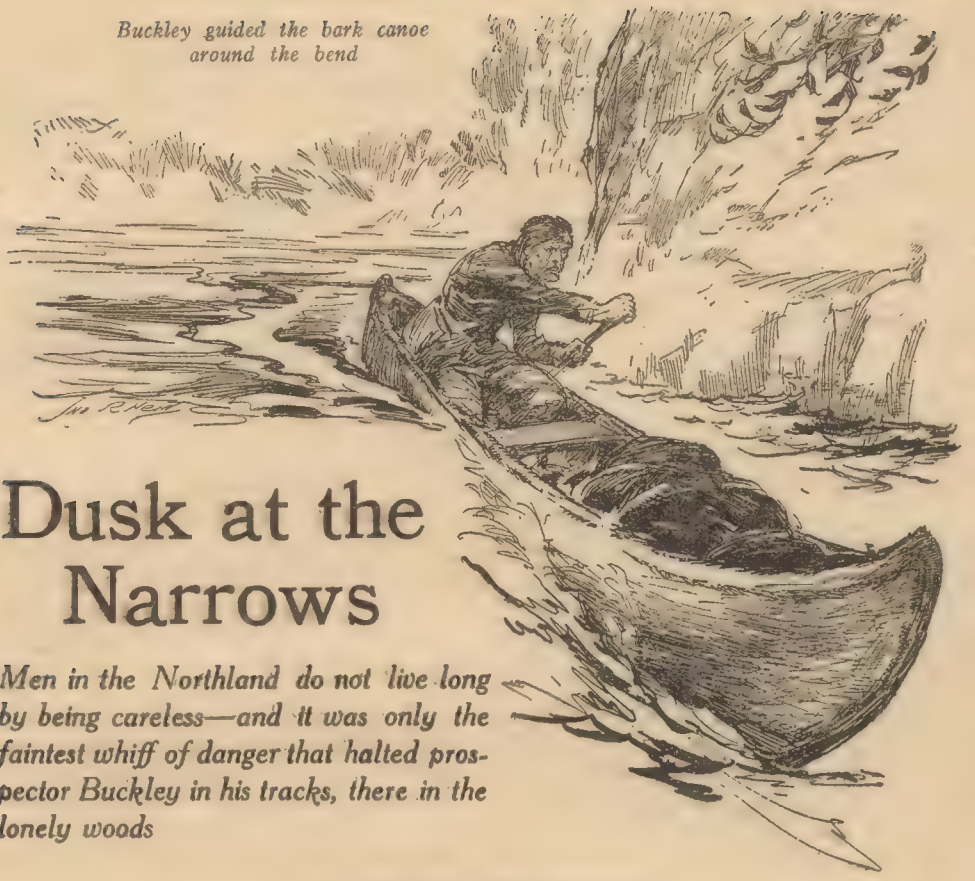
IN tropical Mexico lives a strange kind of large black ant which the Mexicans call "*arrieros*" or thieves. These ants, unlike our northern species, do not make their homes in small hills or pyramids, but live underground in well constructed nests made in the soft earth and connected by an endless chain of tiny subterranean passages. They are rarely seen during the day, but come out at night in marauding armies to search for food, which they carry systematically away to their cavelike homes.

A coffee planter living in the district where these ants abound, began to notice one day an alarming shortage in his shelled corn. Although he kept a close watch to learn who the guilty person could be, he was unable to discover the thief, and ended by punishing the most likely suspect, a poor peon whom he caught hanging around his property. This action, however, brought no results, and his supply of corn continued to diminish in the most mysterious manner.

One night, some time later, when he was forced to get up to attend a sick horse, he passed by the granary and noticed a peculiar white streak that stretched like a ribbon from the entrance to the granary out into the surrounding forest. Bending close to the ground, he discovered that the strange white ribbon was composed of kernels of maize, under each of which was a giant black ant. He entered the granary and opened the lid of the corn bin. Inside was a veritable myriad of ants busily engaged in making away with the grain. The true culprits were at last revealed.

Calling a *mozo*, the two, lantern in hand, followed the moving white streak into the jungle, where they soon located the home of the *arrieros*, a small hole into which the ant army poured with its burden of corn. Approximately three-quarters of the entire contents of the granary had been carried away to this strange underground storehouse.

Gerald FitzGerald.



Buckley guided the bark canoe around the bend

Dusk at the Narrows

Men in the Northland do not live long by being careless—and it was only the faintest whiff of danger that halted prospector Buckley in his tracks, there in the lonely woods

By BOYD FLEMING

IT was faintly dusk when the bearded prospector guided his bark canoe around a bend far up the Macklin River, and worked slowly toward the wooded shore. Buckley was weak and dizzy, and he gave a low grunt of satisfaction as the canoe grounded upon the gravel beneath the tall spruce trees.

"I'm through for the day right now!" he sighed. "I'll not go through the Narrows until morning. This steady diet of fish is getting me—I'm about all in."

He dragged the canoe well up from the water and then lifted three large trout from within.

"Fish three times a day," he growled aloud. "Grub gone; salt gone; tobacco gone; ammunition gone! It's a darned good thing I have a few matches left or I might have to eat my fish raw."

Suddenly he lifted his head like a startled deer. His keen eyes bored into the shadows along the river banks and his woods-trained nose sniffed the air. To his nostrils had come a faint, passing odor of tobacco smoke.

The light breeze was from down the river, so his gaze turned in that direction. He studied every foot of the river to where it vanished around a bend, but saw nothing.

He dropped the fish and silently slid the canoe deep into the gloom of the

forest. From inside the canoe he took several small moose-skin bags, these he concealed beneath the roots of a twisted birch tree. He then returned to the river's edge and squatted on his moccasined heels, his ears straining against the silence.

"Hm-m!" he grunted after a time. "Maybe old Rogers's warning had something in it after all. Let's see; just beyond the next bend is the Narrows, and after that comes Shallow Pond. It *would* be mighty easy to pick a man off as he went through there. I'll just have a little peek around that bend before it gets dark."

Going to the concealed canoe, he drew a pair of field glasses from a small canvas pack. Then, after a glance at his pocket compass, he turned his back upon the river and strode into the forest. A few minutes later he was laboriously climbing the steep side of a hill.

After rounding the bend below where Buckley had stopped, the river narrowed suddenly between the hill he was then climbing and a low, rocky hill on the other side. Through this narrow stretch for about a quarter of a mile the river rushed swiftly, smashing into spray and foam as it crowded between the many up-jutting bowlders in its course. After that wild quarter of a mile it slid calmly into a wide, shallow pool of foam-flecked water where it rested quietly for a moment before gliding once more on its journey to the south.

Twenty minutes of hard climbing brought Buckley to the crest of the high hill overlooking the Narrows and Shallow Pond. Field glasses in hand, he crawled slowly to the edge of an overhanging ledge of bare rock.

"Now we'll have a little look-see," he murmured, leveling the glasses on the woods and river that lay spread out like a map below him.

THE first spot his glass dwelt upon was the Shallow Pond. At the far side of the pond a ledge of rock extended out into the water, its flat top but a few inches above the water's surface. On this ledge of rock was an old log, left there by high water. As Buckley's glasses swung toward that spot a low exclamation left his lips. A man sat there, lazily comfortable with his back against the log. Across his knees was a rifle.

Buckley watched him for a moment, and then turned his glasses up the river to the spot where it started its plunge through the Narrows. It was not long before he made out the figure of another man at that spot. This man stood slightly back from the water's edge, a rifle on his arm, and gazed up the river. He wore a mackinaw coat of bright plaid and was smoking a pipe.

"I'm glad you've got tobacco—if I haven't," Buckley said with a grim smile. "I guess your pipe saved me from sudden death. By your size and general looks, I'd say you were Black Ben."

Abruptly the plaid-coated man he was watching turned and vanished into the forest. Buckley's glasses swung back downstream to Shallow Pond and the ledge of stone. As he expected, the man in the mackinaw soon appeared on the beach.

The man leaning against the log must have heard him, for he turned his head. The other gave a lazy wave of his hand and continued on down the shore to a clump of spruce trees where Buckley now made out the faded canvas of a tent. A few minutes later and pale blue smoke rose from among the trees.

Buckley grunted again. "So one of them cooks supper while the other watches. As soon as it gets a little darker they will both eat. They know that no man would be fool enough to try to take a canoe through the Narrows in the dark."

He slid the glasses into the front of his faded shirt and strode swiftly into the rapidly darkening forest. An hour later he was roasting his trout over a small blaze in the shelter of a fallen tree. The fish were soon cooked. Two of them he ate, and the other he wrapped in a thin layer of birchbark and put aside.

For a long time Buckley sat there, his tired gray eyes staring into the tiny blaze of his camp fire. This was his second trip out with gold that year, and it would be his last—one way or the other. His find had proved to be nothing but a rich pocket, now cleaned out. but he was satisfied. The little moose-skin bags he had concealed beneath the roots of the birch tree held gold worth several thousand dollars and several thousand dollars would mean peace and happiness for him and the lonely wife and daughter waiting for his return to the rocky little farm far to the southward.

"If I get there!" he murmured with a frown.

Rogers, an old trapper, had warned him that Black Ben was hanging about the river for some reason or other, and Buckley now remembered that Sandy Williams, one of Black Ben's pals, had been in Buckhorn earlier that summer.

"That's the lay of it, all right," he said softly. "That man on the ledge was Sandy. He saw me last time I was in Buckhorn, and found out I had brought in some gold. He and Black Ben know I'm somewhere up the Macklin and will have to get out before the freeze-up, so all they have to do is loaf about until I come out. A bullet in my back, and they walk off with the clean-up."

BUCKLEY knew he was in a tight corner. His only weapon, a rifle, was worthless without ammunition. It would be impossible to continue down the river without passing through the Narrows and Shallow Pond. To leave the canoe and attempt the long trip to Buckhorn afoot would be folly. In his foodless, half-starved condition, and without ammunition for his rifle, he would never live to reach there before the winter snows would be upon him. His one chance was to travel by water, and that chance was blocked.

"They've got me plugged tight," he decided, as his fire died out and he wrapped himself in his one blanket. "My only hope is to carry the canoe around the Narrows and the pond without being discovered."

Early the following morning he was once more on the top of the hill overlooking the river. His field glasses were now shaded by a box-like affair made of birchbark, so that no chance reflection of sunlight would betray his position to the men below.

"The dogs!" he snarled. "Too lazy to find gold for themselves, they let me dig it out and then shoot me when I get through!"

He knew that he could expect nothing less than cold-blooded murder from Black Ben. A well-placed shot from ambush—a shallow grave in the untracked forest—outfit and canoe burned—and he would become one more of the countless men who had vanished into the silence of the Northland.

All that day he lay there in the warm autumn sunshine and watched the two

men below. Twice he stretched his gaunt form full length and slept. At noon he ate the cooked trout saved from the night before.

His long vigil showed him that the two men did not leave their vantage point on the ledge overlooking Shallow Pond. They sat with their backs against the log and talked or played cards. They knew that sooner or later the canoe with its unsuspecting Buckley must shoot through the swift waters of the Narrows and out upon the smooth surface of Shallow Pond. A rifle shot, and then it would be a simple matter to wade into the shallow water and drag the canoe to the shore.

His vigil also showed him that his half-formed plan of portaging the canoe through the woods until he could come out below the two men was hopeless. Deep ravines, rocky ridges, and dense, tangled timber made such an undertaking impossible.

"And an attempt to get through the Narrows after dark would be just plain suicide," he said with a shake of his head. "To wait here means slow starvation on raw fish; and winter is not far off. I must get out before the freeze-up—or never!"

When evening arrived he saw the man in the mackinaw—Black Ben—arise, stretch, and stroll into the forest with his rifle on his arm. A short time later he appeared at the spot near the beginning of the Narrows where he had stood and smoked the evening before. For several minutes he stood there gazing up the river, and then he returned as he had come. Once more he waved to the man on the ledge, and again the blue smoke rose from the camp in the trees.

"It seems to be the regular evening round," Buckley said, his eyes narrowing with thought.

He examined the spot above the Narrows where Black Ben had stood with great care, and then abruptly slid the glasses inside his shirt and turned quickly toward his little camp. His lips held a grim little smile of desperate hope.

"Maybe he'll find something to make his little evening walk more exciting to-morrow night!" he growled.

ABOUT an hour before dusk on the following day, Buckley slid his canoe into the water and headed for the spot where Black Ben had stood the evening before. His canoe held his pack, gold, and useless rifle. With long, stiff-armed strokes of the paddle he shot swiftly across the river and down the opposite side.

Arriving at the spot above the Narrows where Black Ben had stood, he dragged the bow of his canoe well up on the beach and left it with no attempt at concealment. As he expected, he found a well-worn path leading around the bottom of the low, rocky hill and toward Shallow Pond.

He walked slowly along this trail for a short distance, his eyes searching among the rocks and trees on each side. In his right hand he carried a stout club of green birch.

At last he found that which he had seen from his spy-station on the hill: a ledge of rock about six feet high that overhung the trail and was well screened by bushes and young spruce. Climbing swiftly to the top of the ledge, he sprawled flat upon his stomach and wormed his way forward until his head was almost to the edge overhanging the trail. Next he swung the club three or four times at an imaginary head of a man on the trail below.

"If luck is with me, I'll have a rifle,"

he breathed, "and if not—well, I'll have a fighting chance!"

After cautiously clipping away a few slender branches that might hinder the free swing of the three-foot birch club, he composed himself to wait. It was not silent there in the woods. Insects buzzed about his head and from over the hill behind him came the dull, churning roar of the Narrows, but his trained ears relegated these natural sounds to the background. He never moved. Except for the alert glitter in his eyes, he might have been asleep.

After what seemed like hours, his ears caught the faint rattle of stones from the direction of Shallow Pond. Instantly his form grew tense. His right arm drew upward and backward, flattening the birch club along his back.

A moment later there came the light snap of a dry twig and the swish of bushes thrust carelessly aside. The cords swelled in Buckley's neck and his eyes narrowed to slits.

Half a minute slipped by and then, level with Buckley's eyes, appeared the slowly moving crown of a black felt hat.

Buckley's right arm unloosened like a coil spring, and the birch club found its mark.

Without a sound the man in the trail sank to his knees and then fell upon his face. Instantly Buckley was in the trail, glaring down at the motionless figure of Black Ben.

"Got you!" he grated through set teeth. "Now for the killer waiting at the other end!"

Eagerly he looked about for his victim's rifle, but he could not see it. Nervously he rolled Black Ben over and looked beneath him. The rifle was not there.

"Would he come without it?" Buckley gasped, a helpless feeling sweeping over him as he searched every inch of ground where the rifle might have fallen or been tossed.

At last he gave up the search and stood in the trail shoving his long hair back from his eyes with nervous fingers.

"He *did* come without it—probably left it at the camp!" he groaned aloud. "Well, I'm in for it now!"

After glaring down at the man in the trail for a moment, he reached down and gripped the collar of the mackinaw. Dragging the unconscious figure with him, he returned to the river, and there flung his burden upon the beach at the water's edge.

"Well, nothing gained!" he sighed, placing a hand on his bark canoe. "Worse off, in fact—the other 'll be on his guard when Black Ben doesn't return."

SUDDENLY his eyes widened. He turned and stared down at the motionless figure at his feet, his eyes upon the bright plaid mackinaw coat.

"Why not?" he whispered, a note of hope in his voice. "His rifle must be at their camp! It's worth trying!"

Roughly he stripped the bright mackinaw from its owner. Black Ben gave a few low moans and swung his head from side to side with returning consciousness.

Buckley quickly slid into the big coat and, without another glance at its unarmed owner, who was gradually recovering from the unexpected blow of the club, strode down the winding trail toward Shallow Pond. On the way he recovered Black Ben's hat from the ground, dusted it off and straightened it out, and placed it on his own head.

At the other end of the trail, Buckley paused. He looked cautiously to-

ward the ledge of rock overhanging the pond. Sandy was there. His head and shoulders showed above the log, and his eyes were turned toward the spot where the river slid smoothly from the Narrows.

Buckley drew the big coat nervously about him and swallowed dryly. It was rapidly growing dusk.

"Well, here goes!" he breathed. "It's my last and only chance to get home!"

Gripping back an almost overpowering desire to break into a run, he strode calmly into the open and made his way carelessly toward the camp among the trees.

Buckley kept his face turned away from the man on the rock, but as he reached the shelter of the trees he risked a quick glance. Sandy still sat as before, his gaze upon the pond and his rifle across his knees.

Buckley drew a deep breath of triumph and plunged into the tent.

A quick glance about the inside of the tent showed him no rifle. Crawling outside, he searched about with increasing panic, but found no weapon.

"It must be here!" he cried shakily, darting back to the tent and tossing aside blankets and duffel.

With a low groan of helpless despair, he at last gave up the search. He felt dizzy and weak, his tall form weaving drunkenly.

He walked slowly from the shelter of the trees and stared toward the unmoving figure of the man on the ledge. He must stalk that twice-armed man —for, leaning against the log where the other man sat, was the missing rifle.

As he tensed for action, Buckley's eyes narrowed. The other man's head had slowly drooped forward, and his bearded chin now rested upon his chest.

"Asleep!" Buckley gasped in exultation.

Crouching slightly, he moved swiftly toward the ledge. His moccasined feet slid softly over every loose stone and brittle stick. He moved like a shadow.

Buckley was within five rods of the sleeping man when he saw what halted him in his tracks with horror. He straightened up with a jerk and stood there staring.

From the thundering, f o a m i n g mouth of the Narrows shot his own canoe, with the coatless figure of Black Ben swinging the paddle.

BLACK BEN'S eyes were turned to the ledge, and he did not yet see Buckley.

"Hi, Sandy! It's me!" his booming voice shouted warningly.

At the sound of his partner's voice, awakening him from sound sleep, Sandy jerked his head about and blinked straight at the figure of Buckley standing there in the gaudy mackinaw coat.

Buckley's brain worked swiftly, desperately. With a wild gesture he pointed his plaid arm to the canoe.

Sandy whirled, rifle in hand, and saw the figure in the canoe. Like a flash he fired—once, and then he fired a second shot.

Black Ben straightened with a jerk, and then plunged, face down, into the bottom of the canoe; nor did he ever arise.

Sandy watched for a tense few seconds, and then, with a shout, slid into the water. Rifle in hand, he waded noisily through the shallow water until he could reach the drifting canoe, and then turned toward shore, dragging it after him.

Buckley, knees quivering from

weeks of almost-starvation, staggered to the rifle left behind beside the log. As his clawing fingers closed upon the cool steel, he gave a low growl of triumph that was almost a moan.

With a strong heave Sandy Williams shot the canoe onto the beach, and then turned his attention to the limp figure within. He turned the body over and stared with widening eyes into the lifeless face of his partner.

He straightened up with a jerk and whirled snarlingly toward the man in the mackinaw. One look and his rifle snapped to his shoulder—one short fraction of a second too late. He looked straight into the bright flash from the rifle in Buckley's hands.

THE END.

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Strange Obstructions

PERHAPS the strangest tree in the world is the *balété* which grows in the Philippines. Foreigners clearing land for planting or for road construction have frequently found that their laborers would refuse to cut down such a tree owing to their belief that it was inhabited by a woods deity called the *tik-balang*.

While clearing a Mindoro sugar plantation a few years ago the laborers went on a strike rather than lay an ax to a huge *balété* which blocked the railroad right of way. One of the American engineers settled the matter. "I'll strike the first blow," he told the natives; "then the *tik-balang* will not blame you." After the first chips flew there was no further trouble.

The *balété* lives by absorbing neighboring growths, reaching out for them with its creepers and making them a portion of its own being. The result is remarkable, a single *balété* tree with its annexes often covering a space fifteen yards square. At night when the moon shines down on the jungle the effect of the light on a *balété* tree is weird, the tree greatly resembling a vaulted church with innumerable columns.

As for the *tik-balang*, natives declare it to be a gigantic demon having the head of a horse, and the body, wings, and legs of a grasshopper. It is said to possess the power of taking on human form, and of changing humans to *tik-balangs*. Not long back the town officials of San Pablo in Luzon turned out the entire population to search for a child thought to have been kidnaped by such a demon.

Deserted ant hills are other obstructions that the American engineer or planter must be diplomatic in order to destroy. As with the *balété* he must strike the first blow, for the superstitious believe them to be inhabited by a gnomelike creature called *Matunda sa Ponzo*. Even after the foreigner has sunk pick or shovel into such a hill the laborers will often murmur apologies to its supposed tenant before completing the work of demolition.

Old ant hills frequently occupy much space on a tiny Filipino farm, but the landowner will not molest them. It is his belief that some day the *Matunda sa Ponzo*, if treated with respect, will appear and point the way to hidden treasure or to valuable herbs.

C. A. Freeman.

"This here closes out my account"

A Run on the Bank

Sheep and stampeding cattle don't have much sense, once they get started—but they're neither as blind nor as dangerous as panic-stricken depositors who hear the bank is shaky

By WALTER MARQUISS

THOMAS JEFFERSON DAVIES plucked nervously at his white mustache as he peered out the bank window. He looked at Tom, Junior, and shook his head sadly. Through the door came a buzz of voices, the angry voices of neighbors who had loved and trusted Old Tom for thirty years as their village banker. Overnight their mood had changed, with news that the big canning factory had defaulted its bonds, and rumors that the Davies Bank was heavily involved.

"Oh, the fools!" Old Tom cried. "Don't they know a run on the bank will ruin the town?"

He paced back and forth, his long, slender hands working behind his back. "Sixty thousand in deposits," he muttered, "and while we've a far larger cash reserve than most banks, we have not got half that much cash in the vault." He halted, shivering. "Good Lord, Tom! Do you know what a run means? The bank's sound, but—we'd have to call our loans—bankrupt two-thirds of our customers. John Lane, Cale Dickinson, Millard Foster—all good as gold when their crops are in, but now— We'd have to sell 'em out, ruin them and ourselves too." The old man was all but crying. "I couldn't do it, Tom!"

Young Tom wished he knew more about banking. He was the editor of the *Weekly Bulletin,* and operated the town's only job printing plant. Now and then he came in to help his father and Harry, the bookkeeper-teller, when they were swamped in a rush. The bank and newspaper office were in the same building, connected by a door.

"What about getting some cash from Danville, dad?" Tom suggested.

The old man shook his head. "They

would want to investigate first—twenty-four to forty-eight hours . . . No, the only hope's to persuade Dave Miller to let his account stand. People are like sheep; whatever Dave Miller does, they'll all do."

Young Tom produced a mirthless chuckle.

"Fat chance! The more you argue with that rich old nickel-squeezer, the more bullheaded he gets. I know—I've just finished doing a big printing contract for him. He'd let the town go smash and his business with it before he'd risk any of his cash."

A startled look came upon Tom's face. Swiftly he consulted his watch. Half past eight; in thirty minutes the bank must open—with most of its depositors already in line outside, like vultures waiting to pounce.

"Look, dad, I've got a hunch! Tell you later!"

He ran into the vault, which Harry had just opened.

"Harry!" Tom snatched up several bundles of currency. The teller came hurrying over. "Harry, pile all the bank's cash in the cage, where they can see it as they come in. I'll be back by opening time."

Hands deep in his coat pockets, Tom hurried into the printing office, behind which his car was parked. At five minutes to nine he came striding back, lugging a heavy suitcase. As he opened it, his father's eyes bulged, for it was crammed with bills, bound with white bands. Jack Williams, the village marshal, followed, and Tom set him on guard with a rifle.

ON the floor Tom placed the bundles, so that large red figures on the bands could be seen from the street: bales of fifty hundreds, labeled "$5000"; similar sheaves of tens, marked "$500." A score of persons pressed to the window to watch, audibly counting the total as Tom laid the bundles down. Forty thousand dollars! Tom waved airily, and the spectators shifted their feet.

One man clung to a place by the door. Dave Miller, dour-faced owner of the Dollar Store, the richest man in town, would take no chances. Forty thousand, eh? Well, he'd see that he got his, before it was all gone. That would not last long in a run on the bank!

Miller was first through the door when Harry swung it open on the dot of nine. Young Tom, in the cage, greeted him cheerfully: "Morning, Dave! Fine day!"

Grunting, the storekeeper presented a check. Tom casually told off seventy $100 bills.

"Ain't you gonna check it up?" Miller demanded sharply. "That there closes out my account, y' know."

"Oh, that's all right, Dave," Tom replied. "We know you're too honest to try to gyp anybody."

"Huh!" Miller grunted. He rubbed his chin, scowling thoughtfully. Plainly he had expected an argument. "Huh!" Turning slowly, he stalked out.

The wrinkled old face of Mrs. Hammerschmidt peered anxiously up at Tom. She held up a well-thumbed savings account book, which told a story of years of pathetic thrift.

"I want to draw all my money out, please," she said in a cracked, piping voice.

Tom smiled at her. "Two hundred and two dollars. Lot of money, Mrs. Hammerschmidt. What are you going to do with it?"

"Put it where it's safe! I'm savin' it t' pay for my fun'ral, an' I can't afford t' lose none of it."

Tom's eyes were moist as he handed her the money.

For two hours the depositors paraded past the wicket. The money inside the cage was almost gone. Old Tom said:

"Better get some of that in the window, hadn't we?"

"Not just yet, dad. Bad psychology if we do."

A few moments later Dave Miller appeared before the bank window, scratching his chin as he regarded the untouched pile of notes on the floor. He reëntered the building and spoke to Tom.

"Well, I see y' ain't had t' take none o' that money out o' th' window yet."

Young Tom shrugged. "Didn't expect to, Dave. We only put it there to show you foolish skeptics how sound the bank is."

MILLER squinted toward the window for a long minute; orderly sheaves of indubitable government notes. A sheepish grin spread over his features. He produced the $7,000 which he had withdrawn two hours before.

"Guess I was kind o' hasty, Tom," he mumbled. "Just make me out a deposit slip for this here, will you?"

Within an hour the news had spread so fast that most of the closed accounts had been restored—even to Mrs. Hammerschmidt's funeral fund. Then, as the last depositors had left the bank, Old Tom put the question he had been wanting to ask his busy son for the past hour.

"Say—where'd you get that cash, Tom?"

Tom returned: "We'd better get that back in the vault. The marshal won't want to watch it all day."

When the bundles were transferred to the vault, Young Tom grinned. Breaking one of the bands marked "$5000," he peeled off the hundred-dollar note on top and bottom, revealing in between a neat pile of green paper slips, cut and printed to resemble, after a fashion, dollar bills.

Old Tom batted his eyes and made a throaty noise as he read:

$1 DOLLAR COUPON $1

100 of these coupons will entitle customers to $1.00 in merchandise

At Dave Miller's Dollar Store

"I guess," said Young Tom, "I'd better be getting these back to the print shop. Dave 'll be sending over for 'em, 'most any minute."

THE END.

The most exciting and mystifying detective magazine on the market is *Detective Fiction Weekly*, formerly *Flynn's*. Read "The Killer Type," an unusual novelette by George C. Henderson in the October 25th issue and see for yourself! Also stories by such noted writers as J. Allan Dunn, Colonel Givens, Nels Leroy Jorgenson, Robert H. Rohde, Charles Somerville and others. *Detective Fiction Weekly* costs ten cents. Read it!

The Men Who Make The Argosy

DON McGREW

Author of "Alexander the Red," "The Masked Barmaid," "Tiger Dick's Doubloons," etc.

THE man behind the Big Desk has asked me to do various and divers things with the pronoun I. And what a dreadful task that is for writers and members of the Lambs Club!

Indiana is my native State; and though once upon a time I lived in Bagdad-on-the-Hudson, and tried to hide the earmarks behind a cane, spats and a Homburg hat, some butter and egg waif from Logansport, Fort Wayne, or Hagerstown would invariably pierce through my disguise, to the Hoosier core of me, and call upon me, as a fellow lodge member, in moments of distress. The Hoosier stamp is always recognizable. In my peregrinations over the seven seas I have never been able to fool any one of discernment: once a Hoosier, always a Hoosier.

My activities? A soldier in the regular cavalry, in Mindanao—Mexican Border service in the Second Maine Infantry—a dispensable lieutenant commanding a one pound gun platoon with the 103d Infantry, 26th Division, in France—newspaper experience from reporter to managing editor—a young cub who, at the age of nineteen, wrote a story in the Philippines, and subsequently sold it to the late Charles Agnew MacLean—that, I think, touches some of the high lights. I have been hither and yon, and up and down the face of the earth, and have finally cast anchor in Seattle where God rested—according to our Chamber of Commerce—after giving mere routine attention to the formation of other spots on this mudball.

Likes? Above all, active, thinking, observant people, who, in their travels and occupations have been constantly athirst for added knowledge. My favorite game is *chong ki*—though Dr. Lasker, Anderssen and Zukertort called it chess. But, to offset this esoteric yen, the Hoosier virus manifests itself in sheer, downright roughneck enthusiasm—à la Al Terhune—over baseball, football, a rattling good scrap in the ring, fishing, camping, barging about in my launch, and my dog. You can criticize my stories, but I warn you—lay off my launch or my dog!

As for fiction, I read over again, about once a year, such stories as "Huckleberry Finn," "Treasure Island," "Septimus," "The Virginian," "The Beloved Vagabond," and "Lord Jim"—not to speak of Conrad's other works, and Kipling's tales of the inimitable *Mulvaney*. And though I would like very much to swank about as a two-fisted adventurer with the air—in addition—of a polished cosmopolite, I never get any further than first base. For—and there is nothing anomalous here!—as the editor swings a blue pencil over my stuff, so does Friend Wife edit me.

Best of luck to you . . . and I hope this will do.

Sincerely,

DON MCGREW.

Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint

A QUESTION OF VERACITY

SOME time ago we published an article on "Wandering Waterspouts," by Charles B. Dean, which read as follows:

Those awe-inspiring travelers of the tropics, funnel-shaped columns of water and cloud moving in erratic courses over their native element, are unwelcome guests when they come inland. For then the waterspouts become cyclones with all their attendant destruction.

Recently, two of these sea wanderers invaded the more or less peaceful suburbs of Los Angeles and left a trail of destruction in their wake. Occasionally, waterspouts are observed off the California coast, but old inhabitants failed to recall any previous visits inland. Factories and dwellings were unroofed, standing motor cars moved from place to place and wrecked, unoffending citizens whisked up bodily and set down again—not too gently; and last, but not least, one surprised suburban citizen was horrified to find a well-grown octopus in possession of his front lawn.

Of course, in California, stray waterspouts—like other vagaries of climate—are unusual and are not to be considered as permanent liabilities.

Immediately on its appearance we received a number of letters, several of them abusive, from readers who declared that Mr. Dean had invented the entire article. One of these letters, from J. A. Heard, of Aruba, Dutch West Indies, nominating Mr. Dean for membership in the Ananias Club, we published in our September 20 issue.

In the interests of fair play another reader now steps forth in Mr. Dean's behalf and says:

Reading, Pa.

Although I have been a reader of ARGOSY for over four years, this is the first time I have written to you. I have two reasons to write now.

The first reason is to take the side of one of your article writers, Charles B. Dean, in the unfair accusation made by Mr. J. A. Heard.

Mr. Heard called Mr. Dean a liar unjustly, for he had no proof that Mr. Dean was a liar. In the writer's article Mr. Heard will notice that Mr. Dean wrote, "*Recently*, two of the sea wanderers invaded"—and immediately after Mr. Heard read it (for he says, "To-night I read—") he wrote to ARGOSY and termed Mr. Dean a liar. As Mr. Heard is on the Island of Aruba, Dutch West Indies, the waterspouts could have invaded California since he left.

He will also notice in another sentence that Mr. Dean says, "but old inhabitants failed to recall any previous visits inland." So it is not strange that Mr. Heard should not have seen or heard something that cannot be recalled even by old inhabitants.

Mr. Heard can also read Mr. Dean's last paragraph again in which the writer states that waterspouts in California are unusual.

I am not saying that there were or that there were not any such instances in California recently, because I do not live there myself and because I did not hear of any there till I read Mr. Dean's article, but I *will* stick up for a writer when he is called a *liar* without proof.

The second reason I am writing to ARGOSY is to tell Mr. Strode H. Kern of East Cleveland, Ohio, that I have nine ARGOSIES previous to July 19 issue that he can have for nothing if he will but pay the postage for them. In them are many of the authors that he mentioned in "Argonotes" that he liked. The issues are from May 10, 1930, to July 5, 1930. If he desires them my address is

MARTIN R. WOOMER,
946 North 6th St.

Now comes the testimony of a Californian—a resident of Los Angeles—who was there and *saw* the phenomenon; who viewed the damage left in its wake. Says he:

Los Angeles, Cal.

In response to Mr. Heard's letter, inspired by the article "Wandering Waterspouts," I would like to say that wherever Mr. Dean did get his whisky, if he got any at all, it certainly did not stir his imagination in regard to his article. Early in March of this year, a waterspout did take upon itself to visit Los Angeles. It descended first at Hawthorne, a few miles westward, then swept on inland to Los Angeles, doing considerable damage to small dwellings, garages and plate

glass windows. It passed over this neighborhood in the shape of a queer-shaped, unbelievably black cloud. At Twenty-Fifth and Santa Fe Avenues it lowered again, accompanied by a torrential downpour of rain.

I talked with one victim, who, nursing a badly bruised head, declared the white, whirling funnel of water and wind that dropped from the black cloud carried him three hundred feet through the air. Automobiles were wrecked in that vicinity; poles were knocked down, and the building of a glass factory was unroofed and twisted around. Timbers were carried by the wind and driven through the roofs of neighboring factories and corrugated sheet iron from the glass factory building was scattered for blocks around.

The waterspout descended again at Ninth and Santa Fe, doing damage there also. I did not view the damage there, but can absolutely vouch for the other. A pair of trousers that shrunk to "high-water" from wading around at the scene still hang in my closet. A small octopus, or devil-fish, was found in a near-by suburb, evidently deposited there by the wind and water. Closer to the coast, tons of salt water rained down, according to the papers.

All my twenty-one years have been spent in southern California, and this was the first time I ever witnessed or heard of anything like it. On several occasions I have, however, viewed black, whirling funnels called "waterspouts" roving over the sea a few miles from the coast. That, I believe, is an admirable spot for them to confine their activities.

ROY HIGGINSON,
348 East 40th St.

The details in Mr. Higginson's letter, it will be noted, corroborate Mr. Dean's article on every point. Which all goes to demonstrate once more that it is poor business to go off half-cocked and that we should be sure of our facts before flying off the handle and denouncing anything in this curious old world as untrue.

It is our aim to keep these little articles as accurate and veracious as possible—but it is their unusualness that makes them interesting and justifies their publication.

HAROLD DE POLO is the favorite with this fan:

Cincinnati, Ohio.

I have been reading your magazine for several years and of all the stories I have ever enjoyed none have been more interesting than those of Harold de Polo—particularly those named: "24 Hits, 19 Runs," "Good-Advice McGonigle," "The Liar Tells the Truth."

Please tell Mr. de Polo he has several admirers at our house, for all who read his short stories like them.

In the September 13 issue was another clever amusing story, "The Mysterious Mascot," by Art J. Purcell. I hope there will be more of his work in the near future, for I liked it very much indeed.

MILDRED PERNATT.

WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE for this reader. Incidentally, Oscar J. Friend will soon return with a Western serial:

Wauregan, Conn.

I am writing a few words of praise for William Merriam Rouse. His other tales were very good, but "Avalon" is superior to anything he has ever written. It is almost as though his spirit had undergone a complete change. "Avalon" to me is a thing of beauty, a breath of the centuries past, of courtly dames and dashing cavaliers willing to die for their ladies' smiles. There is something gripping about such a tale as "Avalon." Let others say what they will, I say it is great. Berton E. Cook's "Ghost Ships" is also excellent and out of the ordinary, while "Dead Line," by J. Allan Dunn, is superior to "Beyond the Law." I wonder if Oscar J. Friend has quit. I never see any more of him.

JOSEPH GORMAN.

ANOTHER cheer for R. F. Starzl:

National City, Cal.

The best fantastic short story you have ever published is "The Red Germ of Courage," by R. F. Starzl.

Please ask Mr. Starzl to write a serial story for you and the readers of the ARGOSY.

J. W. LATIMER.

AND another:

Decatur, Ark.

Each ARGOSY seems better than the last, and the September 13 number beats the future, unless you continue giving us more from Mr. R. F. Starzl, whose "The Red Germ of Courage" is the best science story I have read in a blue moon. It is better than "The Planet of Peril." Not enough of Mr. Starzl's story to become tiresome, as so many of these impossible ones are, but plenty to pep up the imagination. Couldn't you induce him to write a super-scientific serial? Betcha it would be a wow.

And please continue giving us the little sketches

at the bottom of the pages wherever there is room.

ARGOSY is our favorite magazine, and the only permanent one in our home. Others come and go, but ARGOSY comes on forever.

Yours Argolastingly,

CLARA E. BUSH.

BACK numbers. Perhaps some of our readers can supply them. Write to Mr. Swanson direct:

Washburn, N. D.

I especially want the *Allstory* for November 24, 1917, containing "Through the Dragon Glass," by A. Merritt. I also want others containing stories by Garret Smith, Ray Cummings, George Allan England, Austin Hall and Homer Eon Flint, Edgar Rice Burroughs and others; in fact, all science fiction stories that I can get.

I am a regular reader of ARGOSY now and have certainly enjoyed reading the science stories by Ray Cummings, Ralph Milne Farley, Otis Adelbert Kline and the other writers of this type of story. Of course I read the other stories, too, but the science fiction is what I like best. I don't care much for Western stories.

I hope that you will be able to publish this letter or part of it at least, so that I may hear from readers who can supply these back issues.

CARL SWANSON.

YOUR CHOICE COUPON

Editor, ARGOSY,
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

5._____

*Name*_____

*Street*_____

*City*_____ *State*_____

10-18

Looking Ahead!

The Snake Mother
By A. MERRITT

At last we are able to present the long-awaited sequel to "The Face in the Abyss." It is three years since the publication of Mr. Merritt's last novel, but when you have traveled with *Graydon* back into Yu-Atlanchi, the valley of the deathless people, we know you will agree that twice as long would not have been too long to wait for such a novel as this!

Man's Way
A *Bellow Bill* novelette
By Ralph R. Perry

Written in Sand
A Whispering Tale
By Erle Stanley Gardner

COMING TO YOU IN THE ARGOSY OF OCTOBER 25th

Minister's 9-Year Old Boy Runs $3 into "Fortune"

Former Poor Country Preacher Reveals Small Son's Secret That Saved Family Home and Brought Prosperity and Happiness. A Life Drama With a New Kind of Happy Ending That Will Probably Amaze You Because It Shows How You, Too, May Find the End of the Rainbow.

As Related By
REV. C. V. McMURPHY

"I Now Have No Fear of Financial Problems."

WITH a sigh of despair Rev. McMurphy thought of the hopelessness of his present situation. Would the little home he had just built for his loving family be snatched away, he thought. How could he ever meet the builder's notes that would soon be due? How could he even earn a living, now that their little car had broken down and they were no longer able to travel their district to carry on their ministerial work? The outlook was surely despairing!

Then as swiftly as misfortune had darkened their home, the darkness vanished. And it was his little boy who lifted the shadow. "Daddy," he exclaimed, "I have a surprise. Don't worry any more. I have a way out of our troubles." Excitedly he told his astonished father of an article he had read about the president of a million-dollar institution in Ohio who had founded a plan to help worthy men and women out of their financial troubles. Breathlessly he told that he had written this man—Curtis W. Van De Mark, called the great public benefactor because of the noble work he is doing for others.

Eagerly Rev. McMurphy read every word about the vast business of this big institution—scattered all over America—business so widespread that it is possible to help local men and women in a pleasant, dignified way to end their money troubles. "What a generous offer and how easy and simple, too. The end of my financial worries," exclaimed Rev. McMurphy!

Why he even offers to make a local profit-sharing "Pardner" of everyone who follows his easy plan. "How can such a thing be possible?" thought Rev. McMurphy. Yet it must be true. He won't even let anyone risk one penny buying anything. He just wants you to follow his simple plan in full or spare time.

"Why, Daddy," said the boy, "even I can do this easy work. Let me try—please. Just loan me a few dollars to pay my expense, Daddy." Awakened by the courage and enthusiasm of this 9-year-old child, he accepted this generous offer to help. But he also determined to allow this child to complete his wonderful lesson in courage and faith, so he let him go out alone to see what he would do. "My little boy came back in an hour with profits of nearly—$3.00. I said to myself: 'If this child can make that much, I can make twice that amount.' And I took up the work. I assure you I now have no fear of financial problems. The notes on the house have been burned and we have a nice car to ride around in and attend to our church affairs. Last Saturday I went out after two o'clock, made $30.00 and was back before sunset. If all the underpaid country preachers could learn what a great opportunity awaits them with you there would be fewer long faces from financial problems and more good cheer in preaching the gospel."

This true story of Rev. McMurphy's is simply an example of the many letters Van has received from men and women whom he has helped toward ending their financial troubles.

I Send You $18 Worth of Goods

to start you (retail value) at my risk. Send no money for this generous offer—just mail application below. I don't want you to risk one penny. I take all the chances. Maybe you think this is just ordinary work. But don't be mistaken. If you treat me fairly I'll set you up in a business of your own. I'll tell you a priceless secret that will get others to make money for you. Right now I promise to help you toward ending your money worries forever, and I am known to 30,000 "Pardners" as the man who always keeps his promises. Mail the application below right now for my offer. Start in spare time if you wish and I'll still give you my cash offer. If you are a married woman you can surely devote a few spare hours a day. My plan is a funny one. Some of my women "Pardners" have actually made more than their husbands in a few hours on this pleasant, dignified work.

RUSH APPLICATION

This announcement will probably "upset" the nation. Untold thousands will apply for these openings. The time to act is NOW! Tear out the application below and mail it quick. Send no money. **This is not an order. You do not pay anything for this offer. Nothing will be sent C. O. D. Curtis W. Van De Mark, President, THE HEALTH-O QUALITY PRODUCTS CO., Dept. 914-KK Health-O Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.**

Now Van Offers Cash to Other Honest Men and Women

Just Say 20 Magic Words to 10 Ladies and Follow My Simple Instructions

You don't need to sell a single thing to get this cash. This is the new, sensational plan of the famous business genius—Curtis W. Van De Mark—the wizard who has already put more than 30,000 men and women on the road to prosperity. "Conservative" leaders called Van "crazy" for making this radical cash offer. They said it would ruin "conservative" traditions. But cooler heads called it a master stroke that would prove a tremendous boon to prosperity. Van not only makes you his profit-sharing local "pardner"—but he will actually pay you a cash penalty if you don't make $15 the very first day.

No Need to Sell Anything

To Get This Cash Payment

Countless housewives have learned that they can make big savings on our amazing bargain offers. So in almost no time the sales of our products has expanded almost to the "bursting" point. Now we must hurry and employ 1100 more local men and women to take care of new and regular customers in each town. Time must not be wasted! Expense must not be considered! Orders must be filled quick! Customers must not be kept waiting! Big money for our representatives means nothing to us from now on! So I have smashed the so-called "conservative" business traditions. I now offer every honest man and woman steady work and will pay actual cash for just a few hours of their time. You don't need sales experience. What I want is sincere men and women who will be as honest with me as I am with them.

I Pay You a Cash Penalty

If You Don't Make Big Profits The Very First Day

Just say 20 magic words to 10 ladies—20 secret words that have proven almost magical money getters for over 30,000 of my "Pardners"—an amazing yet simple 20-word sentence that took me 35 years to discover, and I will pay you an actual cash penalty if your first ten calls do not show you a big profit. I allow you to make a handsome profit on every order my customers give you. So what is to stop you from making as high as $35.00 in a day like some of my other "Pardners?"

CURTIS W. VAN DE MARK, President,
The Health-O Quality Products Co.,
Dept. 914-KK Health-O Bldg.,
Cincinnati, O.

Dear Van: I hereby apply for opening as "Pardner" in my town to start on your new cash Penalty plan. Send your sensational offer of $18 worth of products (retail value) to start me and your written warranty. Also tell me how I can make money introducing you to ten ladies and using the 20 magic words, and other instructions. **This is not an order—send nothing C. O. D. I risk nothing.** I want

$.....per hour.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

When tempted to over-indulge

"Reach for a Lucky instead"

Be moderate—be moderate in all things, even in smoking. Avoid that future shadow* by avoiding over-indulgence, if you would maintain that modern, ever-youthful figure. "Reach for a **Lucky** instead."

Lucky Strike, the finest Cigarette you ever smoked, made of the finest tobacco—The Cream of the Crop—"IT'S TOASTED." **Lucky Strike** has an extra, secret heating process. Everyone knows that heat purifies and so 20,679 physicians say that **Luckies** are less irritating to your throat.

©1930, The American Tobacco Co., Manufacturers

"It's toasted"

Your Throat Protection—against irritation—against cough.

We do not say smoking **Luckies** reduces flesh. We do say when tempted to over-indulge, "Reach for a **Lucky** instead."